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The Walled Fortress: An Autoethnography Of An International Student Who Became An Esl Educator

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**THE WALLED FORTRESS: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF AN
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WHO BECAME AN ESL EDUCATOR**

by

ELIZABETH CORAH-HOPKINS

DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2015

**MAJOR: CURRICULUM AND
INSTRUCTION**

Approved by:

Advisor

Date

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DEDICATION

To my incredible parents, Donald and Jean Corah, who have loved and supported me unconditionally. You instilled in me the qualities needed to accomplish this goal. I love you so much.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my dissertation committee for all their help and support these past few years. Dr. Phyllis Whittin, thank you so much for chairing my committee throughout much of my doctoral journey. You have always believed in me, and I have been grateful for your grace, open-mindedness, and encouragement. I stand in awe of your wisdom and expertise. Know that someday when I grow up, I want to be just like you. Dr. Sandra Gonzales, thank you for taking me under your wing and for chairing my committee these last few months. Your passion for autoethnography is infectious, and I have learned so much from you. You always encouraged me to dig deeper while smiling and saying, “You can do this, Elizabeth!” You have helped me enjoy (and at times survive) the dissertation process. Dr. Justine Kane and Dr. Bruce Morgan, thank you for sharing supportive critiques and positive observations of my work. You have contributed much to my knowledge and growth.

I thank all of my wonderful and loyal friends. There are so many of you, and you have each supported and motivated me in your own way time and time again. I am grateful for you all and would not have finished this without you.

Gordon and Jacob, you are wonderful sons, and I love you so much! As I have worked on my degree, I’ve seen you transition from children into fine, young men. Thank you for encouraging me to cross the finish line and for making sure I’ve taken time to laugh along the way. I am a very, very lucky mama.

Jacquelyn and Justin, you're such great step-kids, and you've always offered hugs of encouragement when I've needed them. Justin, know you are an incredibly talented artist, and that this neophyte sketcher has been grateful for all the tips you've given her.

Andy, my amazing husband, I couldn't have done this without you. Thank you for your patience these past several years. Thank you for understanding when my research took precedence and for enthusiastically listening when I bounced ideas off of you. Thank you for all of the extra errands, the cooking, and the laundry you did. Thank you for being a calming presence when I needed it. Thank you for all the walks. Thank you for believing in me. I love you very, very much.

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CHAPTER 1: A WALK IN THE PARK

A Walk in the Park

*I bounce, then shuffle, then plod
Tightly weaving myself in, back and forth, crisscrossing the park
Lost
Vision freshly invaded by migraine-orange speckles
Eyes burning from last night's farewell tears
Lost*

*I ask for direction, receive a quiet scan from top to bottom
Slotted de facto, I'm in(di)visible!
Message not so loud yet very clear
I am lost, it's not my territory, not my place
Head down, can't look into passing eyes
My backpack is heavy and digs into my shoulder*

*I bounce, then shuffle, then plod
Tightly weaving myself in, back and forth, crisscrossing
Lost
Vision shackled more and more by those migraine-orange speckles
Eyes burning from last night's farewell tears
Lost and losing control*

*Figure it out, follow others to find **THE WAY**
My childhood adage, **I think I can, I think I can**
Mute beyond simple tourism, deaf except for the beating of incidental words
A point in my pack digs into my back, I lean my neck forward just a bit to
Make the pain go away
A scuff on my shoe distracts me, is it from here or there I wonder*

*I bounce, then shuffle, then plod
Tightly weaving myself in, back and forth, crisscrossing
Lost
Vision violated by those damned migraine-orange speckles- **JUST GO AWAY!**
Eyes burning from last night's farewell tears
Control lost*

*Focus on trees
 Trees grow everywhere
 I squint to see clearly, calmed by their greenness, constant and compliant
 This maze can be maneuvered, no reason for anyone to think me
 The fool
 The pain spreads, leaning my neck forward a bit more, I stick my chin in the air*

*I shuffle back and forth, my rhythm is off
 Tightly weaving myself in, back and forth, crisscrossing
 Lost
 Still in the park
 Those speckles have melded into patches of blinding orange, no good
 My eyes burn with unwelcome tears, I just don't want to do this*

*The rat has found the cheese! Out of the park and on my way, don't look back
 My shirt soaked in sweat, the eye speckles fading to a dull brown, my walk is over
 Climbing cracked linoleum stairs to my tiny room, hallway lined with faux brick walls
 Engraved with needle-thin vulgarities
 The window with the sagging goldenrod curtain, yes, **I KNOW** it's ugly
 The circled 'A' on the pane breaking my view outside into patterned pieces*

*It's run down for a place known for being so orderly and clean
 So am I
 The real world is disappointing, lesson learned, heavy for a young age
 Breath is leveled, beating heart re-commanded
 Speckles are gone but so wiped out, grateful to be able to crawl within
 The phone rings down the hall, not answering- **IT'S NOT FOR ME ANYWAY!***

*It was just a walk in the park
 Tomorrow I bounce and shuffle and plod
 Lost again perhaps, there is no map, no sense of direction
 Here
 But my eyes won't burn or tear, they can't
 I have staked my claim, tomorrow I will walk again*

I wrote this poem recently as I looked back on my first moments alone as a study abroad student in Wuerzburg, West Germany. I had sat myself down in my office on a

gray Sunday afternoon, a glass of red wine to my left, my journaled notes to my right, my laptop in front of me, my dog sleeping at my feet, pausing occasionally to stare out the window at the school yard across the street. With this backdrop in place, I let 'er rip, writing the entire poem in one sitting, going back later only to do some very minor wordsmithing. This was possible because the memory itself continues to play itself out in my mind in vivid technicolor and stereo sound. This was possible because the poem quickly became my safe house, a personal space for me to curl up in and metaphorically bare it all.

To this day, more than 25 years later, I can remember the panic I felt as I carried a bag jam-packed with clothes through the city's large maze of a park, focusing hard on the scuffs on my shoes, popping out at various streets on the park's periphery only to realize that I had no idea where I was going and had no working plan to figure it out. I can hear the thumping *whoosh* of my heart in my ears, I feel the wave of extreme heat that moved up and down my body, and ultimately, I remember the onset of that debilitating migraine contorting my already strange surroundings into Picasso-esque geometric shapes. My body kicked itself when it was down. Less than a day before I'd been in a hotel room safe with my father and in controlled *tour guide mode*. Then Daddy was gone. I was nibbling on a reality cookie, and I didn't like the way it tasted. There were a lot of reality cookies that year, and I know they bloated me and stretched me and left me unable to fit into my comfortable skin.

To be clear, this wasn't my first time in Germany. I'd been several times before, initially as a summer exchange student and then later on as a backpacker. I'd been a student of German in middle school, high school and then after this study abroad

experience went on to earn a BA in German from my home university here in the States. Part of earning that degree included moving through this year abroad. I headed into my Wuerzburg adventure upbeat and confident. There was plenty to be learned, but I was far from green – or so I had thought.

Actually, I did get up from my desk at one point while writing that poem. I moved to the kitchen and poured myself a second glass of wine. Maybe it was the wine that Sunday afternoon that generated the unanticipated gush of creativity and helped record the apparitions of my experience in Germany.

Poetry differs from traditional linear discourse, for while traditional discourse effectively frames information sharing in a chronological fashion, poetry stands on its own as an affective mode with distinct evocative power. Indeed Langer (1957) points to poetry as an outlet to feeling and expressing life, which is what makes it such a valuable and distinct linguistic form. Poetry is aptly described as a fine art. It is absorbed through the gut, through the heart, and through the soul, and it stimulates (it does not create) a distinct and important way of knowing. This knowing may be hard to put one's finger on precisely because it is intimate, intuitive, and *senseful* instead of sensible. Of course, poetry uses words like other forms of language, but it is *how* those words are used to paint a lingering picture in one's mind, which makes it valuable and powerful.

Poetry provides a direct route to ideas we would never (un)intentionally go to or linger over (Shapiro, 2004). I am awed by how poetry is more liquid than solid, in focus, yet fuzzy around the edges. It can lead to important insights regarding the human condition. It is because of these very traits that poetry has earned a place in qualitative

research, which is aimed at a deeper understanding of the many interpersonal interactions and socially constructed realities enveloping us all (Carr, 2004; Furman, 2004). The usage of poetry in research acknowledges that the concept of *knowing* is multi-dimensional, complex, and abstract.

Germany (and the German language) has woven itself tightly into the fibers of my being and has established a strong gravitational pull on my soul. I am well aware that this pull has been something of a double-edged sword, both empowering me and at the same time jabbing at me. As I have moved through my childhood, into my young adult years, and now sit in front of my computer as a firmly footed middle-aged woman, there is something about my life journey and the role Germany has played in that which remains largely unexplored. Whether I am pleased with it or not, I know that Germany has established a deep root system in my soul and continues to spur my personal and professional life journey even though I haven't set foot on German soil in over twenty years.

As I ponder this, I sense the importance of taking time to unpack old thoughts and feelings and to become more aware of the relationship between my private, quiet internal world and my more blustery, day-to-day external world and how Germany has worked to bridge the two. This clearly constitutes uncharted waters for me, for when I returned from Wuerzburg after a little more than a year, I didn't talk much about it. Not then, and I haven't up to now. People would ask *how was it* with excitement in their voices and body language that screamed *tell me everything!* My canned response was an anti-climactic, "*It was a real opportunity to learn a lot about life,*" delivered with a non-

committal shrug and an awkward smile. No details divulged. One day, when I was talking with my aunt, however, I acknowledged that I had gone to Germany assuming I'd come back to become a high school German teacher, but I returned knowing that would never be the case. It just didn't generate the excitement it once had. After hasty reflection, I shifted my focus on to graduate school and earned a graduate degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

*Generally when she strolls in, it's **make-up-an-excuse-to-not-talk-time**, but today I'm not quick enough. She sits down and notes I have no tutoring appointment for a while. And so I am swept up into her **And Anyway** verbal flood. I am a quiet participant in this conversation, yet I am not passive. My private thoughts are my life preserver, for they silently weave in and out of her endless babble and serve to keep my head above the water:*

So, I'm so excited about something I just started doing, and anyway, I thought I'd just stroll on into your office and talk to you about it and see if maybe you could help. [This has to be about ESL stuff. God, I hope she didn't try to help an ESL student in the Writing Center. She doesn't know what she's doing!] I think this is JUST SO INTERESTING. And anyway, I found this quickie class about becoming an ESL teacher, [Oh Dear God. This has got to be one of those 'You speak English, therefore, you can teach English' things.] and I'm thinking that maybe combined with my Master's degree in linguistics, [This is SO different from linguistics. This is real.] I could get more hours here working with ESL students, who are so motivated. I mean you

never see an ESL student misbehave or get in trouble, do you? [Well, one student once threw his briefcase full force at the classroom wall. And then there was that bully who took money from students and got expelled.] Anyway, I see what you do here. You get to learn all about all of these different languages and cultures while you teach these people our language and help them with their classes. I mean your job is like traveling around the world except you don't have to pack a bag! And anyway, I just think you open up so many doors for them. I mean without you I know that most of them wouldn't make it. [Why is my job always seen as more important than a writing center tutor's job or a math tutor's job? Why is my job commonly perceived as providing academic CPR?] I mean, how could they really? And anyway, I just had my first class, and we talked about how it takes years to learn enough English to go to college and write a paper [Fair enough- so many struggle to cross the finish line and graduate. So many burn out. I see it in their eyes.] and I don't know how they do it. And anyway, I have to keep a journal, and I was thinking about talking with some of your students [to satisfy your curiosity or to give my students a voice?], and then I want to talk to you more. I mean what do you do with those students who struggle? [If you only knew. I am ashamed but once in a while, I proofread chunks of their writing because it really does take years to get where they need to be- and that assignment is due tomorrow. Others need them to succeed right now. A lot of them struggle hard, and wind up humiliated and angry

and feeling like losers.] *So, what do you think? Can we talk more about this some time?*

*I tell her there is just no time these days. She babbles a while longer but eventually leaves at which point, I can dry out from the **And Anyway** verbal flood.*

I am an ESL teacher and am now also a college administrator, charged, among many other things, with helping to recruit and support the college's *international population*. I love the direction my career has gone in, and I've crossed paths with all kinds of remarkable individuals. I have held various ESL positions throughout my career, having taught at a private language school, at a large research university, and in student homes. I have been at my current institution, a career college, for almost seven years now. It is uniquely perched, nuzzled between a well-to-do suburb and a poverty-stricken urban area. Many, many different life stories and perspectives on the world float through the hallways.

The non-native English speakers (NNES) I've worked with over the years comprise a small minority of the broader student population and come from widely divergent backgrounds. Some are immigrants, individuals who have permanently resettled here and (hope to) have citizenship (Li, 2003). Others are international migrants, non-U.S. citizens here in the U.S. on a long-term basis (Caidi, Allard, & Quirke, 2010). In addition, political refugees, migrants to the U.S. who fear persecution in their home country (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), have periodically made their way to the college. Over the years, I have celebrated the arrival of many green cards, a predictable and understandable moment of student pride, which has always reminded me of the day a

16-year-old *finally* gets that driver's license. I never tire of the chuckled student observation that a green card isn't really green at all. One particularly driven student from the French Caribbean struck gold with her green card and within a week had a job providing customer service over the telephone to clients in Quebec. Most of my students aren't that lucky.

Many of my students have come to the U.S. to earn a degree with the full intent to return to their home country once that goal is achieved. Over the years, I've also had short-term sojourners move through my classroom, here to learn English for personal reasons or because their employer requires it. I recall one Croatian girl in a writing class I'd taught one fall. She had come to visit family nearby in the summer and then found her stay extended as her country fell apart and war broke out. Her painful journal writing about her inability to reach her family and friends, about what she was reading in the newspaper, about the guilt she felt when she thought about her opportune safety here in the States, broke my heart. I also remember two established professionals who found themselves in the same class. One was Japanese, a very reserved gentleman who was in the United States for three years, working as an engineer for an American branch of a Japanese auto supplier. The other was a very gregarious businessman from Brazil, who had been sent to the school for six months to improve his English skills as his sales territory had expanded into the United States. Their personalities were as opposite as could be, yet they seemed to strike up a friendship of sorts, perhaps because everyone else in the class was in their late teens or early twenties.

It's never been unusual for my students to share intimate aspects of their personal lives with me. I think periodically of a Korean immigrant who had married an American

soldier. They were divorced and she was trying to support herself by cleaning houses while she worked on her degree. She shared personal journals with me that described her life in a brothel when she was a young woman in Korea. I think of a young man originally from India who explained the game of cricket to me in agonizing detail (even sharing with me his secret strategies) after I had off-handedly indicated to him that the game looked like it might be interesting. I have heard that a cricket match can go on for days, and I have to say that his description of the game went on for just as long --- or so it seemed. I snapped to full attention, however, when he quietly paused, stared down at the playbook he was drawing for me, and said that cricket made him feel like a man. I saved the many pages of diagrams he drew for me that day for a while, intending them to remind me to do a better job of sticking to the business of the English language when working with students. I last saw this student when he popped into my office to ask about how he could improve his vocabulary. I gave him a few ideas, and he left. He withdrew from the college shortly thereafter, and I haven't seen him since.

I also recall a student who had grown up in a wealthy family in Iraq. After Saddam Hussein had briefly imprisoned her father, her family's home and money were taken away. They fled in the night to Jordan just before the start of the war that led to Hussein's demise. She gave birth to her first child a few months later. She always called me *honey* and described me as her *angel*. My stomach burned when I had to call her into my office in my administrator role to discipline her for having plagiarized a paper. My stomach burned when she crossed the stage a year later at graduation, stopping the student procession to pull me from my seat on stage, and clung to me sobbing that she was sorry and that I would always be her *Gift From God*.

More and more of the students I see on campus have enrolled at the college with an American high school diploma in hand after having settled in the United States as a child. Roberge (2002) indicates that Generation 1.5 students, as they are commonly known, have established a presence on many college campuses across the country. I have often crossed paths with Generation 1.5 students, many of them Latino, and have watched as their stories unfolded. I distinctly remember one student who maneuvered his studies while balancing two part-time jobs and the weight of an ill mother, who spent most of her time back in Mexico receiving treatment. I spent many hours tutoring this student as he struggled with his paralegal classes. I reflect with great pride on how I saw him cross the stage at his graduation and how he came to visit me one day with tales of his new job in a law firm. However, I also think of a more recent student, brought to my attention by a teacher concerned about a sudden drop in attendance and quality of work. The student was a young high school graduate who aspired to become a teacher. She had quickly built a reputation at the college as a cheerful, intelligent student with a strong work ethic, and her sudden disappearance was a surprise to everyone. In a follow-up telephone conversation I had with her, she indicated that she had a baby and that after her mother and aunt's recent deportations, her younger brother and her older brother took turns watching the baby while she came to school. The four of them had become homeless and her younger brother had gotten in trouble for missing too much school. We made an appointment to meet, and I was hoping to find the girl a work-study position at the college, but she never kept the appointment, and soon thereafter she was dropped from her classes for lack of attendance. I also think of the high school junior I met quite recently at a local inner-city community center where I had been asked to judge their

Teen of the Year contest. The contest was anchored by contestant speeches, and I was mesmerized by this young man, who was emotional yet articulate as he described the proudest day of his life, the day he was able to say that he was in the United States legally. When I talked to the young man, who went on to win the contest, I easily picked up on his youthful gusto for life, and yet, I could also sense that there was a particularly worldly and cautious side to him as he voiced his concerns about family and his ability to reach his goal of becoming a civil engineer.

I wonder a lot these days. I wonder about the successes and failures of these students (and of other students), and I wonder if I have understood their needs and have addressed them in the best way possible. I wonder how they feel about their experiences in the U.S. and what their opinions are about Americans. I recognize my position as a linguistic and cultural outsider, and I wonder to what degree my life experiences and worldviews could connect with theirs. It is indeed important that I begin to learn more about these things, for English language learners (ELLs) have emerged as a potential enrollment force on my current campus. Holding in my hand an article given to me by my supervisor about an initiative to recruit Hispanics at a university in Georgia, I can hear her voice in my head saying, “We need to get into the local high schools and reach out to the ESL population. There is an untapped market out there. Come up with a plan. We need a plan.”

An untapped market, my supervisor says – as if such a charge equates to going to a store, buying a bicycle for my niece’s birthday, and coming home to piece it together. When it comes to these students, I have been unable to simply insert Tab A into Slot A. It doesn’t work like that. This has been a bit of a jagged pill for this hardworking

perfectionist to swallow. Anecdotally, many of the students on my current campus simply don't persist to graduation. They are around for a while and then disappear, sometimes because they have not succeeded academically and sometimes for unknown reasons. Sometimes students drop obvious hints that they are about to exit the college whether it's through tears shed, a raised voice, or some other expression of frustration. At that point, it's likely too late, and after time and money have been invested by both student and institution, there's nothing to show for it except an incomplete transcript. So while this wondering of mine incorporates genuine, noble desire to understand what my students are experiencing, there is an urgent, pragmatic side to my pondering as well.

The following question drives my research: To what extent, if at all, will an exploration and narrative analysis of both my experience as a sojourner international college student as well as how my emotive response to that experience has affected my sense of self, carve out a deeper and more empathetic understanding of my professional charge of assisting multicultural, non-native English speaking students who are striving to reach their post-secondary educational goals?

My study contributes to the infrequent yet needed research that explores the challenges faced by non-native students in higher education. Its deeply personal and emotive emphasis provides a new perspective within this domain of research. Indeed, the work's intimate and emotional angle leads to a fresh understanding, as it pushes one to not just *know*, but to *know by feeling*.

One outcome of our increasingly globalized world has been an intensified multicultural and multilingual layer on college campuses. This mandates that tacit or

altogether unexplored assumptions about non-native, language minority students moving through their post-secondary experiences must now be brought into the research spotlight. Indeed, while Horner and Trimbur (2002) focus their research on academic writing, they indicate the need to study the significantly globalized slant of 21st century higher education:

There is little question in our minds that U.S. college composition today is more cosmopolitan than it was, say, twenty years ago, not to mention one hundred years ago ... The task, as we see it, is to develop an internationalist perspective capable of understanding the study and teaching of written English in relation to other languages and to the dynamics of globalization. (pp. 623-624)

This internationalist perspective cannot be confined to written English, but must extend to larger issues of access, learning, and the persistence of multicultural and multilingual students in higher education. This includes a critical consideration of student understandings of the college experience and related perceptions of self, which is what this study works to accomplish.

This study has significant personal value, for while it contributes to the literature, it remains *my* story--- my personal, emotive responses to my study abroad observations and experiences and how those responses impacted my identity. It is my aim that a deeper understanding of those emotive responses--- including what led up to them and what happened as a result of them--- will foster a more sophisticated and empathetic consideration about the experiences, emotions, and identities of the English language learners (ELLs) I am charged to support today as a professional. I believe that honest personal reflection, expressed in narratives, poetic expressions of self, and simple sketches will provide valuable clues about my identity as an educator. This slant is designed to deepen understanding of learning and teaching, paving the way to personal

empowerment instead of traditional measurement (Hayler, 2011). And so, my dissertation effort deliberately works to connect my past to my future, to understand personal shifting identities and how they have fueled my beliefs and practices, all so that I can move forward with a deeper sense of *me*; this is appropriate for as Friere (2000) has indicated, I must as a student take control of my learning if I am to take authentic control of my life.

However, my study is contributing something meaningful to the broader world as well because of how it implicates and affects my readers (Ellis, 1999). Intimate and engaging interactions with my audience move them from readers to *hooked* partners, who accept the challenge to become my sidekicks in my research undertaking. I believe that members of my audience are neither distanced nor disengaged from my story and are prompted through their engagement to intimately reconsider their own knowledge and experiences in a way that forges new veins of understanding, what Chang (2008) describes as a fresh connection to the studied culture. My study contributes to the greater scientific good because it offers my audience “the gift of self-examination and self-transformation, and...the opportunity to avoid being static, complacent, and myopic” (Berry, 2006, p. 104).

I drank the final gulps of coffee at the bottom of my cup even though it had gotten cold long ago. The coffee shop was loud and crowded. Occasionally, our conversation was interrupted by the squee-ishhhhhhhhhhhhh of a machine creating some sort of flavored latte or cappuccino. Every once in a while, someone's backpack or purse would nip at one of our exposed arms. We had window seats, which was nice, because spring had just sprung, but it was increasingly warm and had become uncomfortable for me.

We'd arranged to meet at the suggestion of my advisor. My coursework was coming to an end, and I was looking ahead to my qualifying exams and dissertation. On my to-do list was the need to flush out my dissertation methodology. In the course of our conversation, this professor, someone who would go on to sit on my dissertation committee, indicated that she believed strongly in a methodological approach called autoethnography. I listened to the introductory description she provided, and I quickly latched on to comments about emotion and the power that stories hold. I've always loved to read and paint pictures of developing plots in my head. This was obviously a very out-of-the-box way to approach research, and I was energized by the challenge it presented. I went home and sent a thank you email to her, and I said I was intrigued by her comments about autoethnography and would begin to look into it. What I really meant was, "I'm in. Sounds good to me. What's the next thing I need to do?" Obviously, I had no idea what kind of journey I was embarking on.

This has become very tender territory for me. Tears have almost become the norm, telling me that choosing autoethnography is more than a mere step in my dissertation process. It's bigger than a step. It's a mountain. I have wondered why at this point in my life an inner voice, an agitated curiosity, has called me--- nagged at me, really--- to take on an autoethnography. Why make it tougher than it need be? Why not tackle a traditional dissertation and choose to remain at a safe distance from my research?

Those are very fair questions. Truthfully, I'm in a very good place in my life today, and a lot of exciting things are almost magically unfolding before my eyes. My stars are most definitely in alignment. After being divorced for several years, I have

recently married a kind and gentle-hearted man – truly the love of my life. After four years of juggling doctoral classes with all the other demands of life, I have passed my qualifying exams and have entered the dissertation phase of my PhD studies. I am involved in a succession plan at the institution I work at, and it appears that I will be moving up the corporate ladder within the next few years. My baby has just headed off to college, and my eldest is applying to graduate school – oh happy day, I am an empty nester! So why wouldn't I continue in this vein and slip into a safe, traditional approach to my dissertation? Why rock the boat?

Alas, I have realized that until I reconcile myself with my past, learning the lessons that might be learned from it, I can't fully embrace that future and all the wonderful things it contains. My senses simply aren't as sharp as they could be --- or should be, really. Despite all this good stuff, something is a little off. I have noticed a weight I have carried for a long time and have been alerted to how it digs into me. I'm ready to finally deal with it, stand upright, and then move forward. I recognize this means there is to be no easy in, no easy out. There is no checklist, no place where I can get the dry facts and then go home to analyze and write. This is not meant to be a safe and sanitized process for me. Oh yes, I have accepted the challenge before me.

From my office I hear the happy voice of a colleague calling, "Elizabeth, come on out and meet Klaus. My whole family is here to take me to lunch. They're going to go shopping afterwards, so Klaus can buy some gifts to take back home to Germany. You've been so helpful with ideas about things to do and advice in general. I'm glad he's here so you can meet him. Come on out here."

I put a plastic smile on my face, stand up at my desk, and move toward the waiting area where Klaus the German exchange student stands with his host family. My colleague stands next to Klaus and is smiling. She is indeed the perfect American Mama to this German exchange student. My eyes focus on Klaus, and I click into hostess mode, introducing myself to him in German. Klaus comments in English that he hasn't heard German in several weeks and that it would almost be easier for him if we were to just use English. All eyes are on us. I smile and continue the conversation in German, speaking as quickly and as fluently as I can. Klaus notes --- again in English --- that I speak German very well. I continue to babble on in German, telling him about where I studied in Germany, and I ask him how he is enjoying his stay. He answers --- this time in German. I smile as we continue to talk in German because I have successfully won this linguistic arm wrestling match.

I always seem to get this way when I meet a German. Puffed up. Stiff. In control. Very much in control. Plastic.

When I purchased my home a few years back, I worked hard to implement and sustain a new lifestyle policy. It's quite simple, really. Whenever I bring something into the house, I need to take something out of the house. This has translated into closet purgings before hitting my favorite department store, a difficult post-injury parting with my lucky tennis bag and beloved Babolat racquet before permitting myself to purchase bicycling equipment, and a phone call to my cable company to dial back on my monthly bill because I'd discovered the wonders of Netflix. It may sound silly, but I am now consciously choosing to extend this policy to cover my experience with multilingualism

and multiculturalism. I am committed to sorting through my memory closet of unexplored perceptions and experiences, long buried under a pile of life, and then welcome in new and deeper understandings of where I have traveled and where my journey will take me next.

Qualitative research employs variation, flexibility, critical thought, and innovation (Trainor & Graue, 2013). Those who undertake qualitative research, as Denzin and Lincoln (2000) indicate, “stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (p. 10). Graue and Karabon (2013) note further that qualitative research “represents efforts to describe, sometimes scientifically, other times artistically; to understand, sometimes inductively, sometimes deductively; and always to challenge, by looking closely at something and learning through particularity” (p. 12).

The context through which *I strive to dig deeply within as a way to know* is an autoethnography, part of an important development in qualitative research where, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), a broad, post-modern, critical approach to informing and changing social knowledge is positioned equally against traditional positivist conceptions and analyses of human experience. My cultural focus is studied via my own story, *my* place in a complex social world, so as to generate deeper understanding of connections between myself and others (Ellis, 2004). Autoethnography provides an insider’s vantage point and paves the way to self-understanding, which, in my case, may then lead to a greater understanding of those linguistic minority students I am eager to serve. The aim of the study is that a deeper, more critical understanding of

self will provide points of reflection and insight for others in education, specifically for those who work with non-native English speaking students. To have a deeper understanding of my past experience and then to use what I learn as I move forward is valuable, for as Abraham Lincoln said in his famous *House Divided Speech* in 1858, “If we could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do, and how to do it” (as cited in National Park Service, 2014).

I believe in the subjectivism of Crotty (1998) whereby all knowledge is inherently personal and is grounded in individually unique beliefs and life experiences. I concur with Denzin and Lincoln (2000) who assert the impossibility of an accurate, untainted view of the life of another, for I do not believe that any researcher is truly capable of separating self from the collected data of the researched world. I am crafting my skills as a researcher and yet because I am a human being, I am forever incapable of uninvolving myself from the humans I choose to study, for frankly there is nothing neutral about social phenomenon inquiry. And so, with this understanding in place, I am comfortable turning my data gathering lens inward for an autoethnographic undertaking instead of the more traditional outward approach.

Autoethnography has become a standardized term for a spectrum of research that utilizes researcher experience as a means to explore and better understand culture. This spectrum ranges from *evocative autoethnography* at one end, which through its deep grounding in postmodern thought rejects the traditional analysis of ethnography, to *analytic autoethnography* at the other end, which prioritizes a traditional contribution to theoretical understanding (Hayler, 2011). Within this spectrum, there is varying emphasis among researchers across three areas: self (auto), culture (ethnos) and descriptive

research (graphy) (Chang, 2008; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Hayano, often credited with being the original autoethnographer, describes autoethnography as the work of *insider* anthropologists (as cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Those at the forefront of evocative autoethnography include Richardson (2006), Denzin (2006a), Ellis (2004), Bochner (2000), and Spry(2001). Evocative autoethnography focuses on generating meaningful writing on societal topics so as to generate emotive response and internal reflection in the reader. Ellis speaks of “heartful autoethnography” (1999, p. 669) whereby personal--- often painful--- memories serve as springboards into deliberate cultural introspection, which in turn provides both researcher and reader with insight into how to better navigate life with compassion and empathy. Others, such as Anderson (2006), Atkinson (2006), and Vryan (2006), call for an analytic autoethnographic approach, which remains firmly entrenched in the analytic ethnographic domain. A common thread tying all autoethnographers together is their systematic focus on experiential memories as well as the thoughts and emotions involved in the process of recollection, writing, and analysis, which then serve to enlighten and empower both writer and reader.

Autoethnography is both toolbox and tool (Hayler, 2011), both theoretical framework and methodology, and requires participation and introspection as it leads the author and the reader through a deep exploration of the human condition and spirit (Denton, 2011; Goodall, 2000). For me, I have already learned that autoethnography is a complex undertaking requiring enormous courage, for it has become obvious that this process of unpacking my story isn’t neat or tidy. It is instead a mucky and recursive plod. Such a complicated venture calls for the incorporation of all my senses and a

cultivation of understanding through the creative genres of story, poetry, and drawing. I view this incorporation not as a nicety or as the spice of uniqueness with which to mark my dissertation; I view it instead as a *necessity*. The creation layer behind autoethnography indicates both intellect and emotion, for what I take away from my experiences is what I am able to make of those experiences. And so I write narratives, compose poems, and sketch images of my memories in Germany and my present work in an effort to best “bend back on the self and look more deeply at the self-other interactions” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740). I do this because I want to better understand the complex social world of which I am a member.

I believe in the power of *thick* description as described by Poulos (2013), which lets the reader know what has gone on, expresses how it all feels, and then vividly packages the impression both the experience and the emotion has made on the researcher. This is the manifestation of evocative writing, which allows the reader to be pulled into the author’s world to be moved to reflection and then perhaps transformed. Such writing is meant to be emotional, colorful, and engaging. Rambo (formally Ronai) (1995,1996) accomplishes this strategically through a layered approach to autoethnography, whereby scientific writing and personal story are deliberately arranged in a back-and-forth writing format, making their equal footing visually apparent to the reader. Bowman (1995) asserts that a layered approach requires readers to maintain a heightened level of engagement and overtly guides readers to critically link the narrative’s meaning to social context. I, too, shall pursue an autoethnographic layered account whereby my story is intentionally layered alongside relevant literature. Such an approach is advantageous to

me, for it provides a structure for me to move through my emotional and intellectual meanderings while concurrently linking those meanderings with existing scientific knowledge and ultimately permits deliberate connections between myself and the social world I navigate.

My choice to pursue a layered account is purposeful, for I believe it optimizes my opportunity for focused critical reflection, which is key to generating a robust and honest conception of the relationship between myself and the established culture surrounding me. Through a layered account, I'm able to explore who I am via where I am across time. I can explore the genuine flow and ebb of my life experiences, the cumulative merging and blending of different perceptions, all of which are superimposed in my mind, layered one on top of the other, and comprising a hybrid me (Rambo, 2005). Like Jones (2013), I strategically choose to employ a layered account from three narrative angles, which inherently move my exploration from the outward to the inward: I am a narrator speaking directly to my readers; I am an author who lets her characters speak for themselves; and I am a vulnerable writer who casts aside embarrassment and the possibility of judgment to speak directly to her inner self in front of a third party audience.

My layered account, however, is not limited to narrative, for I also choose to incorporate both poetic and visual modes of inquiry. I believe that this fusion provides deeper and more emotive access to myself. These angles of exploration are juxtapositioned against each other as well as against contemporary scientific assertions, and when they are all pieced together, they gradually foster a (re)adjusted sense of self.

As I move between these layers, I'm presented with structured moments of reflection, moments where I can assess whether my sense of self is in transit or is transitioned.

An autoethnography is meant to have aesthetic value (Richardson, 2000b) and often incorporates non-traditional modes of expression. Poetry, which I incorporate into my writing along with self-narrative, moves understanding beyond the linear and literal into the arena of human feeling and encourages a different angle to understanding, a nuanced view of that which is subtle, yet critical for both myself and any reader who yearns for new authentic outlets to understand life's experiences. The angle of exploration poetry provides is different from the scientific perspective more traditionally employed in research, and as such it does not cultivate a traditional scientific response. Eisner (2008) notes that incorporating the arts into research, which includes poetry, works to evoke a surge of emotion, which cannot be seen or measured quantitatively, but inherently drives deeper questioning and further exploration. He goes on to discuss the appropriateness of using arts in educational research for "the qualities of feelingful life expressed in human relationships, in the context of education, and in the wider conditions within which human beings live and work are perhaps most powerfully revealed when form is shaped artistically" (p. 7). Poetry permits me to get at the emotive core of the concerns driving my research. A dry, distanced, scientific experience would surely come up short.

I have started my spring-cleaning, and I am sitting down in front of my living room bookcase, a long, heavy maple unit with three rows of shelves. I pick up my Fischer-Dieskau Book of Lieder text from a class in my undergraduate years. A Lied is a

German poem put to song, typically meant for one voice and one instrument (often piano), quite popular in 19th century Germany. The spine of my book is cracked and falls open at pages 284-285. It's a poem entitled "In Der Fremde" by Joseph Von Eichendorff, put to music by Robert Schumann. The page is ripped at the top and stained by something brown at the bottom. At some point, I obviously spent considerable time with this poem. It has moved me in the past, and I find myself pulled back to it again for a few minutes as I look for hidden, deeper, or other meaning. I wonder how the poet Eichendorff intended it to sound. As I read, I paint and repaint pictures in my mind.

My eyes move across the text. I think it may be written about someone who is suicidal. I read it again. I read it a third time. I'm not so sure. Now it speaks to me more of someone who aches to escape life's stresses and take time to rest. That's something I really identify with – I wish I had time to lie on the ground, to listen to the breeze shake the leaves and explore the shapes that the branches create as they jut out from the mother trunk. I'm suddenly sad. I used to do that when I was a little girl – look for shapes amongst branches just like the way I used to look for shapes in clouds with my mama. I close my eyes and am quickly pulled back into my childhood memories. I am transformed and suddenly I'm lying on the ground. A rock pokes the back of my head, so I move a bit to the left. I can smell grass and feel the underside of my arms itching as they rub against the grass. Looking upward into the leaves I see they look dark, their green color blocked by the brightness of the sun filling all the gaps between them.

I open my eyes and they focus on the dust rag on the floor next to me. I appreciate the power of poetry. For me, a good poem is enchanting, a real sensory jolt that pushes me far, far away from the possibility of being indifferent.

I fuse my stories and poems with a visual element, which provides an embodied aspect to my research (Riddett-Moore, 2013). Visual representation is yet another powerful mode of communication and is an outlet that permits the subconscious to become conscious, to help us *see* and thus better comprehend our place in society and our relationships with others. Images both reflect and generate feeling and understanding. Eisner (2002) notes multiple interpretations of the chunked phrase *work of art*, asserting that many will appropriately emphasize the value of the *art* (the product) itself, but that the *work* behind the creation (the process) is also generative and significant. I have already noted that every time I look at my sketches--- my *work*--- fresh thoughts emerge. I've noted that when I am sketching--- when I move through the *process*--- I'm speaking to myself in a new way. Abigail (2011) describes her awakening as she begin to work with her medium of choice, fiber and fabric, and how it opened her up to new outlets for expressing ideas and became her mode for articulating the sexual abuse she had suffered as a young child. Her hands-on artistic endeavors helped her understand and accept herself.

The door is shut. I am alone. My pencil is in my hand. That's nothing new, I write all the time and I'm told I'm good at it. A pencil in my hand should signal safety and comfort. A pencil in my hand should make me feel at home and generate in a familiar sense of belonging.

But tonight I'm going to use it in a new way. I have no idea what to do. I am a non-artist. I am frozen. It is late and I know I need to quickly come up with a strategy. I

decide to reread my poem, “A Walk In The Park.” My strategy is in place. I’m going to bounce. I’m going to shuffle. I’m going to plod. Once again. Those reality cookies keep on coming.

Elizabeth, just put the pencil on the paper and see what happens!

A shoe emerges. And then another shoe. And suddenly they are backwards, arranged for the wrong feet. And the laces come undone and simply cannot touch one another. And then I rub hard to leave dark marks along the edges. And then I put my pencil down and I smear with my finger. I press hard and notice that my fingertip turns first red and then white. I smear one shoe and then the other.

*And suddenly **I see** that it wasn’t just my shoes that were scuffed that day in the park. And I cry.*

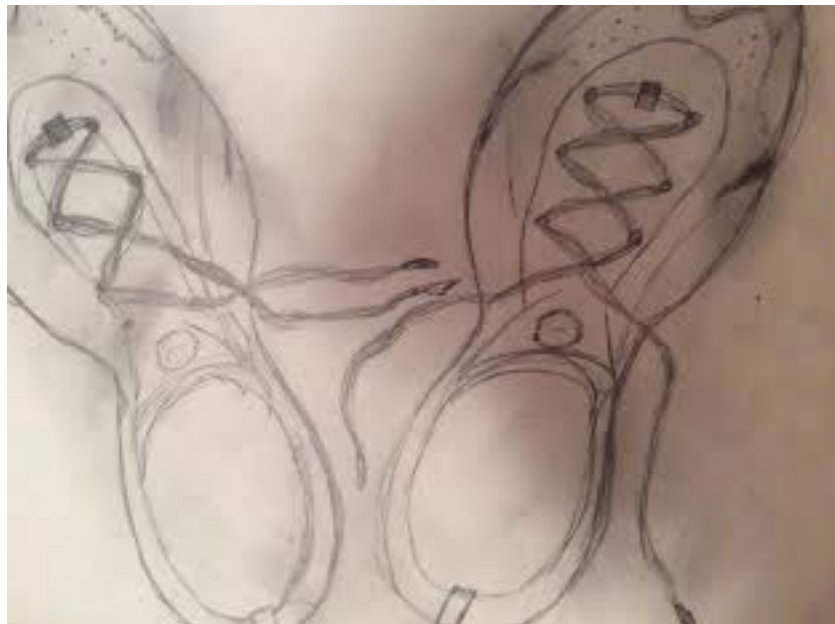


Figure 1: Scuffed

Potential pitfalls exist in all research undertakings, and as an emerging researcher, I must have proactive avoidance strategies in place to avoid them. Particular to autoethnography, a researcher may, for example, fall prey to self-indulgence and as such lose focus on the cultural phenomenon and self-illumination intended to be explored (Chang, 2008; Sparkes, 2002). I am keenly aware that if I become too caught up in my own narrative, cultural analysis and interpretation will fall by the wayside, which would ultimately shift my work into the genre of autobiography (Muncey, 2010). I remain cognizant that autoethnography is meant to be relationally embedded; periodic checks that my work is presented in a fashion reflecting that are a standard part of my research process.

Further, autoethnographers cannot rely too heavily on personal memory as a source of data, for when other sources are not employed to corroborate what memory asserts, validity can be questioned. Because memories are influenced by needs, beliefs, and emotions, they are inaccurate, incomplete, and eternally fluid (Muncey, 2010). Hayler (2011), for example, describes the difficulty he had recalling childhood schooling experiences key to his autoethnographic pursuit and how he turned to childhood photographs to help jar and verify those memories. I am most certainly aware that triangulating memories via interviews, documents, and artifacts should occur whenever possible. I have a keepsake box from my time in Germany on a shelf in the basement and am working to collect artifacts that may help explain my professional connection with ELLs today. I also have interviewing access to my parents and their perspective about my experience studying abroad.

In all research, an ethics of confidentiality must be in place. In an autoethnography, this means having a clear understanding that telling one's story does not mean owning one's story. In other words, personal narratives do not unfold in isolation, and so the researcher is ethically bound to consider how those who are a part of a story might be harmed by the story. Ellis (2004) encourages the researcher to be innovative and compassionate when it comes to other participants, suggesting the employment of process consent; participant negotiation about what can and cannot be included in published work; assigning pseudonyms to participants; and weaving authentic components of a story into fictitious layers. In terms of this work, it is my intent to avoid using names altogether whenever possible and to use pseudonyms when participants are directly referenced. Process consent will be employed when a participant's identity is obvious to the reader.

Validity in autoethnography cannot be established via mathematical equation and must thus be established via alternate means. I agree that an autoethnographic piece is valid if it is believable in the eyes of the reader; if the researcher's subjectivity has been woven into the work; if the work makes substantive contribution and thus improves communication between the reader and the studied culture; if it intellectually and emotionally improves the lives of the author, the reader, and other participants; and if it is aesthetically engaging (Ellis, 2004; Richardson, 2000a).

And so, with a reasoned plan in place, I employ classic German *Gemueticlichkeit*, that unique spirit of welcoming meant to make one feel relaxed and valued, and I invite you to fasten your seat belt and join me on my voyage of discovery as I unpack what

being a second language learner college student has meant to me and how it has woven itself into the tapestry of my broader life.

I remember quite vividly folding clean clothes from a laundry basket in the living room of my first home in the suburbs of Detroit while my eyes were glued to the television news. The Berlin Wall was coming down. We all recognize the famous speech delivered by Ronald Reagan shortly before that watershed moment:

General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall. (The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Library, 2010)

Somewhere in my box of *stuff* in the basement I think I still have a piece of the Wall, given to me by an ESL student of mine who'd been there at the time. When he gave it to me, he noted how it likely had genuine meaning for me while it was really nothing more than a chunk of spray-painted concrete to him. I thanked him of course, and looked at it for a few minutes. I remembered all the graffiti I'd seen on the Wall when I'd been in Berlin. I wondered what word this red splattered chunk in my hand had been plucked from. I then threw it into my purse and hid it away in my box when I got home. I never looked at it again. Today, as I stand at the gate of this journey, I chuckle at the irony of that statement, and I am keen to see if what I'm about to embark on might actually tear down a wall of my own, and if it might lead to my liberation and prosperity.

CHAPTER 2: WE AND THEY

WE and THEY

WE are talking
 and eating ice cream
 on a blistering summer night
 drip drip drip
 streaming droplets of stickiness keep the cone at arm's length,
 an inescapable pond forms at my feet
 i am made a mess i can't seem to control
 eating ice cream is supposed to be fun
 this isn't

you ask if THEY have **X**'d me as an outcast
 oh yes, my skin is forever hot branded
 edges of my soul melt from the iron's heat
 drip drip drip
 droplets of me keep WE and THEY at arm's length
 i have become a mess i can't seem to control
 an adventure is supposed to be fun
 this isn't

It may not be the best of situations to address ELLs on American college campuses at a broad level, referencing them as one collective entity. English language learners comprise, after all, a very diverse group of students and individuals. The

literature is quick to drill down and silo the population, emphasizing, for example, the differences between traditional ELLs and Generation 1.5 students (Harklau, 2000; Harklau & Siegal, 2009; Harklau, Siegal, & Losey, 1999; Roberge, 2002; Roberge, 2009). As such, one might argue that for the purposes of my project, it would be most appropriate to adhere to the established norm of the research and focus on one specific ELL classification. Admittedly, I entered the dissertation phase of my PhD endeavor determined to explore the needs of Generation 1.5 ELLs, the *trendy* ELLs in terms of current research. With time and thought, however, I have realized that such a drilled down approach conflicts with my reality. It conflicts with my story.

Indeed, a basic problem with moving through the hierarchy of second language learners and focusing on one specific category of learner is that in some ways, it doesn't *keep it real*. The fact of the matter is that we, as ESL specialists on college campuses, often experience extensive diversity not just across our campuses, or across our departments, or even across our days – it is experienced across virtually every single class (Ferris, 2009; Harklau, Siegal, & Losey, 1999). Found in one classroom may be those who have moved permanently to the U.S., those who have always lived in the U.S., those with student visas here just long enough to earn a degree, those who are here only for a summer or one semester for the sake of personal enrichment, and those who are established professionals, sent by their local employer to work on their globalized English skills. They are young, they are old; they are affluent, they are poor college students; they have varied educational backgrounds, they have lived varied lives. And even though we, in our profession, typically group our ELLs according to language competency, there is wide variation within the classroom in terms of ability to use

English to express ideas and needs. We as teachers tend to not blink at the instructional challenge this presents. We work to juggle varied student needs and goals concurrently while embracing our class full of students as one holistic learning community. And so, in some ways, if I am not going to reference ELLs in my project one unique and personalized learner at a time, then to consider them in a way that best represents the reality of the higher education system as I have experienced it makes sense if, indeed, a deeper understanding of that learning community is the goal. Clearly, this situational backdrop is not limited to ESL classrooms in the U.S., for it is mirrored in second language classrooms the world over, including the second language classroom I found myself in when I was in Germany.

First day. Butterflies scoot back and forth in my stomach. I look across the room at my peers. I have been placed in the high intermediate level German class. There are roughly 30 of us from all ends of the earth. There is a slightly older Italian lady a few rows over who has already talked a lot in class. She can move so easily between different topics of conversation. I don't have that vocabulary yet. Maybe half of us are here for a year or less, and the rest are here to earn degrees. There are a few Americans and Brits in the room. I don't think any of them are here to get a degree. A tiny Korean woman sits next to me. She says nothing, but her face is focused, and she writes down everything that is said. Everything. A guy from Cyprus sits with his older sister; they trade notes back and forth, and I bet they aren't written in German. The teacher is very friendly and has just explained that the purpose of this one-month course is to prepare us to pass a

German competency exam, after which we will get a certificate to study at the university at any point for the rest of our lives. This is so cool. Let the games begin.

And so, research and statistics regarding second language students in higher education is often contextualized differently than the instruction that plays out in the classroom. As a result, a divide is noted between theoretical research on second language acquisition/instruction and the day-to-day of a second language classroom (Klein, 1998; Nassaji, 2012). Yet, surely the literature can work to inform classroom experiences, and in this specific arena, research can serve to inform teachers in the trenches as they attempt to understand their students' sociolinguistic needs and (de)motivations. Larsen-Freeman (1998) asserts that theory can certainly work to deepen language teachers' instructional effectiveness:

Teachers who have been exposed to concepts and research in SLA courses...often become more learning-centered. The benefit of this shift is two fold: their responses to their students are more relevant, and their own professional development is ensured, for becoming fascinated with what learners do is an excellent way of keeping one's teaching practice vital. (p. 554)

Pica (2005) emphasizes the important point of intersection between teacher and researcher, stressing that the two cannot exist in silos independent of one another if their shared focus on student learning is to be deepened. Unfortunately, though, Borg's study (2009) on teacher attitudes towards research indicates little teacher engagement with research.

I am a teacher, and I am spending more and more time in the world of research. I believe that both perspectives are valuable and that each can benefit from the other. For

this reason, it makes sense to employ a research approach positioned closer to the analytic autoethnographic end of the autoethnography spectrum, which bridges the gap between personal experience and the literature (Anderson, 2006) in a deliberate, highly relevant, and engaging fashion. I shall attempt to do so by layering what the literature is saying with what some of my life experiences as second language learner and teacher have shown.

In the poem at the start of this chapter, I explore my emotions as I searched for acceptance by the Germans during my study abroad experience and my subsequent reaction when I concluded I'd never get that acceptance. Looking back, I know I spent most of my year in Germany wondering *what was wrong with me*. I'd never had any problem connecting with others before. I'd never suffered from intense rejection, and I wasn't known for rejecting others. As this poem describes, a piece of me painfully melted away in Germany. In order to stop the emotional bleeding, I retreated inside myself and cut myself off from much of my surroundings. I countered their rejection of me with my rejection of them. Frankly, it's a coping mechanism I've employed in countless scenarios since that time.

On this particularly hot summer night, near the end of my time abroad, a GI and I struck up a conversation over ice cream. I remember how intelligent and well spoken he was. After talking about the newest information regarding the Iran-Contra Affair (yes, I date myself), tighter security on the bases in Germany, and how I'd once made my way onto the local base just so I could order lunch in English at the Burger King, we were quiet for a bit as we focused on our ice cream. It was rapidly melting in the extreme

evening heat. Pistachio-flavored puddles had begun to merge and form a lake on the sidewalk at my feet, and I struggled to control the mess. I've always hated feeling sticky, no matter what the reason.

After a bit, the GI asked what it was like to be a student at the university, what it was really like to be around Germans all the time. I told him it was hard. With an obvious attempt at caution, he asked if I had noticed that something wasn't right, that there was "something strange going on, something different about these people." I chortled loudly as I tried to wipe up my puddles. I threw my ice cream soaked pile of napkins and whatever remained of my cone into the garbage can.

I shared with this GI a few of my experiences from the past year. I told him how I'd once been sick and had missed a class. I told him how I had asked a fellow student upon my return if I could copy his notes and how that student had called me a "stupid American" and said he didn't know why he should help someone like me. I described how he then snapped his briefcase shut --- *click* --- as if to announce our business together had come to an end, and then he moved to find a different seat on the other side of the room.

By now, the faucet had been turned on and other examples poured out of my mouth, seemingly uncontrollable just like the melted ice cream. I described to my newly befriended GI the time someone had turned off the lights in my dorm stairwell saying "Good night, American," leaving me in the absolute pitch dark and forcing me to cling to the railing for dear life as I felt my way up the remaining steps. I described how I'd been turned away from a disco by a bouncer who had said, "No Americans allowed." I told him how I'd been grocery shopping and had witnessed another foreigner, maybe a Turk?,

getting caught by a stock person trying to shoplift a package of cold cuts and how the police had come into the store and had dragged her at an angle by her hair into a back room. I described her pitiful sobs and screams of apology from the back room, which were woven into high-pitched begging threads that they stop hurting her. I went on to describe the smile of the sweet elderly woman in front of me at the checkout as she looked at me, probably assuming that I was a German, saying, “These foreigners, they should all just leave.” I described how I numbly paid for my food and how I stared down at my shoes as I shuffled out of the store, never, ever to return.

And then I told the GI how after all of this --- and more --- I was just too exhausted and I’d given up on Germans and that I was just going through the motions of my remaining time there. I told him how recently a German, quite possibly a genuinely friendly peer, had complimented me on a presentation I’d made in class. She seemed to want to strike up a conversation by asking me how I’d learned my German. I’d simply thanked her for her compliment and walked away. I couldn’t turn my back to her quickly enough. I had built a personal dam. Emotional *No Trespassing* signs had been erected all around. I was done. Tit for tat. *Auf Wiedersehen*.

The GI nodded and said, “I thought it was just me. For all we’ve done for them, I don’t know why they treat us like this. There’s a lot of American money around here.” I nodded a hearty agreement. Then, after different conversation about different things, we parted ways. I never saw him again. I can’t remember his name, and I can’t remember what he looked like, but I certainly remember our conversation, and I’ll never forget the relentless stickiness of that melting pistachio ice cream.

Language minority students in higher education, no matter what their backgrounds, how long they plan to study, or what they plan to do after their studies are done, are an entrenched campus presence. As economies become more globalized, higher education experienced in foreign countries becomes an increasingly important outlet for broadening student cultural and linguistic horizons. In 2010, 4.1 million students were pursuing education at an institution outside of their country of citizenship with 52% of those students coming from China, India, and South Korea; further, 38% of the world's international students are studying in Europe while 23% are studying in North America (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011).

For international students in the United States, English typically functions as a *lingua franca*, a bridge to their academic studies and perhaps to their future careers. Forty-one percent of these students are pursuing degrees in STEM fields and 22% are working on business degrees. Many who comprise the sharp increase of international students in the United States are from China, Saudi Arabia, and Brazil with many American universities responding to this surge by adding more ESL classes, more generalized support services, and workshop experiences focusing on various academic, social, and cultural issues (Institute of International Education, 2012).

Student sojourners, or study abroad students, are more common than ever before and constitute a specific piece of the international student population. The overwhelming majority of these students remain abroad one semester or less (Institute of International Education, 2012). In the 2010-11 academic year, 320,000 U.S. students studied abroad, with the most popular destinations being Britain, Italy, Spain, France, China, Australia, and Germany (Institute of International Education, 2012). No matter the specific

circumstances, international students provide the host campus culture with varied perspectives and academic capital, which can work toward potential expanded cultural and intellectual awareness for the broader population.

It must be noted that language minority students in higher education do not necessarily possess student visas, for tertiary education is also affected by immigration trends. Nearly two-thirds of new immigration visas annually awarded in the United States, for example, are family-sponsored visas (Monger & Yankay, 2010). The Migration Policy Institute (2010) notes the significant impact current trends in immigration have on America's educational system as roughly 5.3 million English language learners (ELLs) were enrolled in American Pre-K-12 public schools in the 2007-2008 academic year, a 53% increase over the prior decade. As increasing numbers of ELLs are successfully completing high school in the U.S., more and more are opting to enroll at American colleges.

Roberge (2002) indicates that Generation 1.5 students, students who have often relocated to the United States at some point during their K-12 experience, have established a presence on most college campuses. He describes the diversity of this group, indicating that they may be *in-migrants*, individuals who have moved to the American mainland from U.S. territories; *parachute kids*, individuals who have left their nuclear families behind so as to settle with extended family and attend school in the U.S.; *transitionals*, individuals who have moved through their K-12 years via complex migratory patterns; or individuals who have grown up in the U.S. in non-English speaking linguistic enclaves, a reality reinforced by DelliCarpini and Engelman (2007), who note that only 24% of elementary school-aged ELLs and 44% of secondary school-

aged ELLs are born outside the U.S. According to Harklau and Siegal (2009), The Integrated Postsecondary Data System, the country's main college enrollment database, does not require data collection regarding home languages, and it is thus unclear precisely how many Generation 1.5 ELLs are currently enrolled in American institutions of higher education. Regardless, higher education institutions across the U.S. have noted a substantial increase in the number of enrolled students from immigrant families although these increases are seen more frequently in community colleges than in four-year institutions (Roberge, 2009).

She is a cool cosmopolitan girl, the kind with trendy European clothes that fit perfectly on her and highlight her perfect blond hair. And she speaks perfect German. Perfect German. Sabine is a German major like me, who has floated through her classes in the States as a fluent speaker and professor pet. With an American father who had turned his army stint into a full-fledged career and a German Hausfrau mother, she's come from both Long Island and a town near Muenster, West Germany. Together the family had floated back and forth between both locales until her junior year in high school when her father retired from the military and the family set down permanent roots on Long Island. Sabine is a German major attending the same U.S. university as I and has headed off for her year abroad in Germany at the same time as I. Her dorm room is just down the hall from mine and she has promised she would help me with anything in my classes I needed. So, a few weeks into my first semester, I have taken a paper I've written to her. I have struggled to do this as I am not one to seek out the help of others. I like to tackle things on my own. But these are not normal times, and so personal pride

has been set on a shelf. I watch Sabine move to her desk where her authentic German pencil case was filled with authentic German mechanical pencils. She flips that blond hair and when it falls back into her face, she twists it into a knot and uses a pencil to hold it in place. I am mesmerized as I watch her move through my paper. This girl is good. I am lucky to have her. I look--- she even has the German loopy handwriting down. Yep, this girl is the real deal. She smiles and looks at me and says that the paper is very good and has needed only a few changes. She says that with these changes, I'd be just fine. I am, according to Sabine, a very good writer. She asks how much writing I do because I'm obviously a natural. I am grateful, so grateful. And I am confident. I feel good. All those hours --- days, really --- jam-packed with blood, sweat and tears to produce a straightforward three page reflective paper have paid off. Not only was my academic German on the upswing, with her checking and polish, I had full coverage. I have woven myself into a new rhythm and a new system. I remain forever the good student.

What is this? *I am holding my graded paper in my hand, and it is oozing in red ink - the comment across the top states that I need significant work on my sentence structure and my vocabulary is basic. In class, my face quickly turned as red as my scarlet paper. I had glared at the professor, insulted by her blunt comments. I shoved the scarlet paper into my bag and escaped as soon as I could and went back to the dorm. I am now in Sabine's room, sharing my scarlet paper and demanding an explanation. She repeats again and again that maybe she should have read it more carefully and that she didn't understand what had gone wrong.*

Wait a minute. Stop the press. Alarms are going off in my head. Sabine's German is incredible. I've seen her use it with ease over and over again. She's even been in my Germanistik class this semester, and I've watched her charm the uncharmable professor of the course using fluent, flirtatious German! What the heck?

Surely, this situation is personal. I've been blown off – sabotaged even. I am no longer the good student, and it's her fault. She is a snake. This girl is to be avoided. She is not to be trusted. My academic ringer has stabbed me in the back.

And so, language minority students on college campuses are many and widely diverse. Boundaries indicating those who are and are not language minority students are not easily set and frameworks of support, which will genuinely assist these students in reaching their educational goals, are not always obvious. In previous academic environments, teachers may have perceived these students as strong and noteworthy, but in this new world, as they carve out new identities, they may find themselves overtly or subtly labeled as remedial or *less than* by their new academic communities (Harklau, 2000). Second language classes, intended to help, are often perceived by students as a deterrent to complete participation in the tertiary environment or as a marker of illegitimacy in their new worlds (Kanno & Varghese, 2010). The question of when an ELL stops being an ELL and starts being just an English user is yet to be answered.

"I'm telling you right now, she doesn't qualify for ESL tutoring," I say emphatically from behind my desk.

“And I’m telling you she does. She didn’t speak English until she started kindergarten, and she has always spoken Macedonian with her grandparents. She’s struggling because English is her second language,” responds John, a program director, with equal enthusiasm.

“Seriously, John, she’s almost 30 years old. I know this student – I finally got to meet with her. She forgot about the first appointment, and I took time to chase her down to set up another appointment. Her problem isn’t language; she’s very disorganized and maybe just not as serious a student as she needs to be.”

“Yeah, well I disagree. I know she doesn’t always understand what she’s reading and her writing isn’t good either.”

“She showed me something she wrote. She has a problem with run-ons. Lots of native speakers have problems with run-ons too. Give me some credit, John. I know a little bit about this stuff.”

Another faculty member pops her head into my office and says, “Sorry to interrupt, but Carlos is struggling in his legal writing course. Right now he’s hovering around a ‘D,’ but if he doesn’t step it up, he might fail. Can I send him to you for you to work with him again?”

“Absolutely. Tell him to come today and book tutoring appointments. I’ll help him out.”

“I don’t know what to do with him. I hardly notice an accent. His English is good. Man, when he writes, though, he has a problem. It’s so bad, I don’t know where to begin. If I fixed everything, he’d see nothing but red. Thanks. I’ll send him your way.”

*I look back at John, who is giving me a **you-have-got-to-be-kidding-me** look.*

“John, Carlos was in middle school when he came to the U.S.”

John leans in toward me and smiles a bit. I roll my eyes. “Fine. I’ll work with your student, too,” I say, “I’m doing it as a favor to you, though, not because I think she qualifies for ESL support.”

“That’s fine. As long as you’re giving her the help. That’s fine.” He smiles and walks away with a triumphant bounce.

I sit behind my desk and scowl. I quietly wonder to myself where boundaries for ESL assistance should be drawn.

Carving out one’s identity is an ongoing endeavor, requiring intensive, and sometimes painful, personal sculpting. This defining of self requires interpersonal negotiation across social situations, with resulting notions serving as a compass guiding future behavior (Norton, 2000). Because identity is ever-evolving, there is a constant push and pull between prior experienced understandings and real-time discourse. Identity weaves a person’s emotionally packed personal sense into the encircling society and informs that person of what is to be cared about and cared for in the world (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998).

Multilingual/multicultural students may grapple with particularly complex notions of identity, for these individuals are challenged to move toward an intercultural personhood, which is not necessarily bound by a specific culture or language, but is instead an identity sculpted by a broader human interconnectedness (Dolby, 2007; Kim, 2008; Pitts, 2009). Immigrants are obviously impacted by their movement between

cultures and languages. Common sense mandates that their points of reference and varied world experiences must surely affect psyche and intellect. I suspect that many who have not walked in these shoes or have not spent significant time with those who do walk in those shoes are quite naïve about this. When I speak casually with others, I note that immigration is often perceived as a voluntary and deliberate adventure, when in reality it is far too frequently the outcome of trauma and desperate last resort. It is also assumed that immigration is a literal crossing over, a specific moment in time requiring an absolute rupture from the home culture, yet in today's world, this is very rarely the case (Finkelpearl & Smith, 2009). Thus immigration is not black and white; it is not a closure followed by a new opening. Instead, it is a far murkier endeavor, a complex and irregular pendulum swing between the old culture and the new.

Generation 1.5 immigrants, for example, may struggle to pin down their home-culture identity since their settlement in the United States happens prior to many formative experiences (Roberge, 2009). Rumbaut and Ima (1988) indicate that 1.5ers may not only experience a discontinuity with their origins, but may also have a feeling of inherited circumstance, i.e. the realization that significant aspects of who they are can be tied to a decision they did not make. Finkelpearl and Smith (2009) interviewed a *parachute kid* from Honduras, who vividly describes the stress he continues to experience as he straddles two sides of a cultural fence:

My decision to move from Honduras was out of my hands...I was really just executing my parents' wishes without realizing it. My entire generation in my family, and to a certain extent in my school, was raised to leave the country...some emigrated, some overstayed their visas, some came by plane, some by bus, and others on foot across the Rio Grande. We were trying to escape history and come to the country with no history, where history would not find you. I am very disturbed at the thought that I will live the rest of my life in the United States. But where to go? My imagination yearns for a not-the-United

States and a not-Honduras. A place that is sort of like where I grew up, but where FedEx receives packages until 8PM, where there are Wifi hotspots everywhere. (pp. 140-141)

The identities of immigrants are particularly intricate manifestations of overlapping worlds. Finkelpearl and Smith (2009) also interviewed a woman who regularly moved with her family between Germany, Switzerland, England, and the United States until putting down permanent roots in Wisconsin when she was fourteen years old. Her words paint a colorful picture:

I finally became a US citizen last year, but people always assume I'm American, so I rarely get asked where I'm from. I think of myself as "american" now, in lower case not capitals. I probably felt more divided about that as a teenager. What's strange for me now is that my accent separates me from my nuclear family. I remember once we were all out at a restaurant and the waitress asked me who my guests were. People are always surprised when they first meet my family because I rarely remember to tell them beforehand that we all have different accents. I notice that when people do ask me where I'm from originally, I hesitate. The easy answer is Wisconsin, but that feels like it leaves out a lot while the other answer seems like too much information. (p. 39)

Life stress and academic stress work hand-in-hand (Chen, 1999; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). As language minority students move through their tertiary educational experiences, they will likely encounter a range of challenges, which may affect their overall sense of self. Cummins (2001) indicates that academic stress for language minority students often moves beyond typical transitional stress experienced by all college freshmen, noting that past lessons about life and world may suddenly be less relevant for language minority students in a new educational environment and that new guidelines for identity need to be quickly learned. Perhaps as an outcome of this, one study indicates that freshman and senior undergraduate students feel less satisfaction in their college experiences than their domestic peers (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005).

International students, students who intend to return to their home countries once academic goals are met, may have performed at the highest academic level in their home culture, and the expectation of families, sponsors, and the students themselves may be that this level of accomplishment will be sustained in their new college environment; this is often not the case (Chen, 1999; Smith & Khwaja, 2011). While discrepancies in academic performance may be largely attributed to language issues, cultural disconnects in teaching styles and instructional priorities may also be a factor. In Liberman's study (1994), Asian internationals enrolled in U.S. universities indicated that the emphasis on critical thinking experienced in their classes as well as the less formal register between professors and students were constant challenges and sources of discomfort to them as they moved through their studies.

And so, against a backdrop of uprootedness, students work to have their identities recognized, understood, and valued, but sometimes, as they do this, they are faced with unanticipated patterns of domination and devaluation, which may lead to decreased self-confidence (Cummins, 2001; Luttrell, 1996; Smith & Khwaja, 2011). Examples abound about how linguistic, cultural, and racial discrimination in school stems from teachers, peers, and the basic instructional framework higher education institutions have put into place. Conchas and Perez (2003) elaborate on instructor pre-determinations about Asian immigrants and their presumed model student identity. Roberge (2009) notes that Generation 1.5 students are often in a no-win situation with peers as U.S. born Caucasian classmates may negatively perceive them as *foreigners*; U.S. born or long-term U.S. residents of the same ethnicity and/or language background may label them as *FOB* (fresh off the boat); and classmates of other minority groups may view them unfavorably

as *rivals* for jobs. Lee and Rice (2007) describe the overt discrimination experienced by Asian, Indian, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern students in the U.S., which included verbal insults, employment discrimination, and physical assault. Beoku-Betts (2004) describes how White faculty at a British university were critical of the speaking skills of female African graduate students and how these faculty members assumed that a thick accent indicated a need for remedial coursework.

Valdés (1977) indicates that unequal status permits an assumption of deficits moving far beyond linguistic shortcomings. As a result, while course content should be challenging students to think critically, students are often marginalized by simplified, even trivialized subject matter. Morgan (2009) observed several university level English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes and concluded that the rudimentary topics used as a backdrop to language acquisition goals placed enrolled students “in a kind of limbo, in which they are seen as ‘partially formed’ learners in need of linguistic remediation before they can be taken seriously as either producers of legitimate academic knowledge or as worthy participants in public life” (p. 312).

What did we ever do to him? He obviously thinks we are nothing but trouble and inconvenience. Yes, there are probably a dozen of us Americans taking his Goethe course this semester, and yes, this has likely changed the rhythm of his course because our Academic German isn't that great. But seriously, he announced on the first night of class that Americans typically have poor German skills and struggle in his class. He encouraged us to drop. And then, later on in the semester, when I did my oral presentation--- which had kept me up running to the bathroom the entire night before ---

I could tell he was on the hunt for things to criticize. When I was done, I counted through the silence up to five (creating another run to the bathroom moment) and then he simply said that despite the accuracy of its content, my presentation was very short. I meekly said, “Danke,” and ran to the bathroom. Actually as I think about it now, I may have curtsied slightly when I’d thanked him. Oh God...

*This, though, **this** has taken the cake. When someone asked if we could use translation dictionaries during our final exam, he shot the request down immediately. If you can’t do it in German, then you can’t do it. He cited the need to be fair to all students. Then when someone complained to his supervisor and he was forced to allow translation dictionaries, he announced to the entire class that he was doing so under protest. He would check dictionaries randomly to be certain that no cheating occurred. And sure enough, he has now taken my dictionary. I am sitting on the outside chair in a row about half way up the lecture hall. He stopped at my desk, took my dictionary, marched to the front of the hall, and plunked it down on his desk, and now has started to do something else. Does he think he has found something? Is he using me to prove a point?*

Here he comes again. He’s not even looking at me. This is bad. Oh God...Oh God...

That’s it? You take my dictionary for several minutes, throw me into a panic, and then simply put it back on my desk without saying a word? You do this and you just walk away? How am I going to be able to focus now?

Common educational policies and practices have posed challenges to Generation

1.5 students as well. Many Gen 1.5ers are quickly pigeonholed via admissions documentations indicating that they are either American-born with no needed language assistance (they have, after all, earned an American high school diploma) or they are traditional internationals needing ESL classes (they are, after all non-native speakers of English) (Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Matsuda, 2006). Matsuda (2006) describes these options as part of a tertiary “policy of linguistic containment” (p. 641), which permits superficial commitments to diversity on U.S. college campuses.

Indeed, traditional college ESL classes assume that American culture is new and foreign to enrolled students. This is not the case for Generation 1.5 students, and in fact, many of them may perceive of the American culture as their home culture (Harklau, 2000). Many feel as if they are no longer ELLs and resent required enrollment in ESL classes (Schwartz, 2004). Further, college ESL classes often assume that students are structured, formal learners of English instead of daily-users and ear-learners of English. At the same time, developmental reading and writing courses, typically the alternate placement option for Generation 1.5 college students, often unfold with the instructional mindset that monolingual English speakers need to be *fixed* before they are ready to register for *regular* classes (Roberge, 2009). Further, developmental instructors typically lack the specific linguistic training helpful to Generation 1.5 students (Harklau, 2000). Obviously, neither of these instructional scenarios values the multiple discourse proficiencies and global identities that Generation 1.5 students bring into the classroom (McKay & Wong, 1996).

Kanno and Varghese (2010) conclude in their study that four primary things diminish the success rates of ELLs at four year American institutions: limited English

skills; financial challenges; student self-elimination; and a tertiary support focus limited to labeling and fixing student language shortcomings, which is a way to privilege the dominant, native English speaking class. Harklau's study (2000) focuses on ELL immigrant transitions from high school to college and how these individuals experience the various classifications assigned to them. Harklau examines how the reputations of a group of ELL students shift from being perceived by their teachers as "good kids" to being perceived as "the worst kids" when they shift from high school to college (2000, p. 35). While in high school, these ELLs were reputed for their hard work and model behavior, but when those same students enrolled in community college, they were compared to their traditional international ELLs counterparts in their ESL classes and were consequently perceived by many instructors as rebels and underachievers. Conceptualizations and labels attached to ELLs were markedly different between high school teachers and college instructors; this in turn led to student resistance and alienation.

Sabine has been hanging out with the other Americans for months now, and I never hear her using her German here in the dorm. I rarely talk with her but we did bump into each other in the dorm hallway recently. She said she almost never goes to class now. The only good thing about being here is that she gets to visit her Oma (Grandma) every weekend. That and the German food. She giggles that her clothes are fitting much more tightly now. She then adds that she doesn't know if she'll bother to go back to school in the States either. She's been looking into getting a job as a flight attendant with Lufthansa, and for that she wouldn't need a degree. Her plan is to leave for the U.S. as

soon as possible and wait tables for a while until she figures out what she wants to do.

Valenzuela (1999) details the notion of subtractive schooling, the assertion that American education sustains the historic and deeply imbedded cultural assumption that subordinates should assimilate and internalize the cultural norms of the dominant White, middle-class, English-speaking majority. In U.S. schools this means that multicultural children are instructed via traditional White instructional methods and that the general practice of the school is to align with the monolingual, monocultural group. As a result, the unique identities of minority students are ignored and students are more likely to reject schooling or peers who "Act White." While the context of Valenzuela's famous study is a high school in Houston, TX, the context of subtractive schooling is not limited to secondary schooling and is evident in higher education. Valdés (1998), for example, notes in her study of Lilian and Elisa that ESL teachers, those who typically act as the primary advocates of their ESL students and who are prepared for their careers at institutional of higher education, are often unable to approach their jobs and the positioning of ELLs critically; Valdés largely attributes this to the college curriculum these teachers have moved through, which is typically focused on second language acquisition, instructional methodology, and general linguistics. Often missing are valuable courses focusing on multiculturalism, multilingualism, and identity.

Within a few months of being in Wuerzburg, I could feel my own sense of goodness, intellect, and overall self-worth blowing away like a hat on a windy day, and in its place was a position on the periphery. I spent more and more time in my tiny, barren, untidy

room. I stopped answering the floor's phone, and I avoided the common kitchen unless no one else was there. It was better to lay low and ride it out.

An oppositional culture adversely affects student learning outcomes, is unlikely to result in upward social and economic mobility, and affects overall student motivation (Matute-Bianchi, 1991; Suarez-Orozco, 1991). While this assertion applies to student experiences across the academic spectrum, the concept extends into the broader social world of language minority students. Indeed, the need for learners to gain access to the social and linguistic world of their new cultures, which is possible only if their new communities accept them as legitimate participants, is key. In her study, Norton (2000) uses the term *investment* to describe the dynamic between immigrant language learners and their new social worlds. At the onset of her study, participants were highly motivated to learn English, yet in situations where the social power balance was not favorable, they resisted using their English and over time their motivation to acquire the language waned.

I really, really had wanted my study abroad experience to be over-the-top amazing.

Sojourner international students are at risk for a poor study abroad experience if they do not have satisfying interactions with host country nationals, if they experience weak home country identification while living in the host country, or if they struggle with the host language; at the same time, sojourners are apt to have a positive experience if they identify strongly with the host country and maintain a high level of interaction with

host nationals (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 2000). In a study of American sojourner students at a university in Paris, repeated linguistic and cultural misunderstandings generated a level of stress in the Americans high enough to cause many of them to avoid interactions with the French and to shift their focus onto building friendships with co-ethnics (Pitts, 2009).

Applying this concept to the ESL culture, Kanno and Varghese (2010) speak specifically of *ESL habitus*, an understanding of one's status as an ELL and the self-censorship that may occur as a result. Not only might this manifest itself in a refusal to apply to college at all, but if enrolled, it can manifest itself in a hesitation to participate or ask questions in non-ESL classes (Leki, 2007). Further, Kanno and Varghese (2010) note that in their study only 15% of language minority college student participants were involved in any campus student organization. Those who declined to become involved indicated that they lacked confidence when interacting with Americans and struggled when using English. This likely helps explain the dominance of co-ethnic friendships among immigrant youth (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco & Todorova, 2010).

However, extensive socialization with co-ethnics may also lead to a less satisfying college experience and an increased sense of being out of place (Kitsantas, 2004; Pederson, Neighbors, Larimer, & Lee, 2011; Pitts, 2009). Zhang and Brunton (2007) indicate that 45% of studied Chinese students enrolled at a New Zealand university had at least two native New Zealanders friends; these Chinese students reported less loneliness than their counterparts who did not have social relationships with locals.

My mother has come to visit me and together we are riding a very crowded train to Nuremberg to visit the Christmas Market. I know she came at least partly out of concern

because I have an Arab boyfriend here. I hear the click, click, click of the train on the tracks as she asks me if I have any German friends. No, I say. But I have a lot of Arab and Greek friends, which is a good substitute because I have to use my German to talk to them. She nods and then asks if I've made friends with the Americans here. I tell her 'no' and then say that I'm here to learn German. I already know English.

CHAPTER 3: PAPER DOLL GIRL

Paper Doll Girl

Meeting for coffee

In the old part of town, cathedral bells ring, pedestrian heels sound off on the

cobblestones

The autumn wind blows a bit

As we sit outside at the famous cafe

She talked about her first trip to the doctor

Women's problems she said...

I'll never go back, I don't care how bad it gets

These people here are crazy! I just can't believe it!

I had to undress behind a screen and walk across the room

While the doctor was there, I know he looked, I know he looked!

I'm humiliated!

Well, now, I thought, sipping my coffee

I'll never stand completely bare- NAKED- in a room like that

A stranger's eyes on me, trying to understand what is going on

That's barbaric!

No way, no how!

Never! Never!!

I would rather die!

No! No!! No!!!

Not in this lifetime!

Oh you silly paper doll girl. Don't you know famous last words when you see them?

When I was a little girl, I went through a stage when I would spend rainy afternoons cutting out paper dolls. I would cut my folded newspaper very carefully, creating perfect angles around the arms, the legs, and the skirts. I used to love to unfold the chain of handholding dolls, which revealed a perfect, impenetrable line in an imaginary game of Red Rover. I'd sometimes tape a string of paper dolls to my bedroom window because I'd like the way the sun could shine through the newspaper revealing two news stories at the same time. But that paper would crisp up and yellow quickly in the sunlight, and when I'd tear it down from my window, it would rip into many different pieces and was no longer recognizable as a string of paper dolls. Paper dolls are pretty flimsy and don't have much staying power.

Early on during my time in Germany, another American from the group of exchange students began to have some minor but persistent gynecological health issues. We had already arranged to get together for coffee downtown when she mentioned she was going to go to the doctor's beforehand. Over my cup of German coffee, I was appalled to hear how her examination had gone. She described to me how the doctor had entered the examination room and had sent her behind a screen to undress. He then had her walk naked across the room to the examination table. We both found this a cold and heartless approach to learning about a problem and delivering care, most certainly very different from the American norm. We were both adamant that we would never go to a gynecologist in Germany (again). We would never allow ourselves to be displayed naked in front of others for the sake of figuring out what is going on – there could never be any value in that.

Now, many years later, the context is different, but I find myself metaphorically naked and am participating in an autoethnographic examination. I have grown to see that there are many different but effective ways to explore and attempt to determine what's going on.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) remind us that qualitative research is an inductive process of gathering descriptive data with the aim of generating a deeper understanding of the meaning human beings attach to the *stuff* of their lives. In a nutshell, qualitative research concerns itself with a better understanding of our complex social world. Ethnography, one established approach to qualitative research, focuses on people and their cultures, with the researcher collecting data via observation and participation in settings. As such, interviews, focus groups, field notes, and surveys are common in ethnographic research. Autoethnography is a relative newcomer to the domain of qualitative research.

Autoethnography has evolved out of postmodern thought, which asserts the inappropriateness of privileging any one way of conducting research, as truth and reality are not viewed as fixed entities. Indeed truth and reality are motley commodities, highly malleable and apt to be pruned and expanded as perceptions and beliefs are affected over time and through experience. As such, prior epistemological assumptions of objectivity and the unavoidable impact the researcher has on research are cast aside in postmodernism and are supplanted by a nod to the notion of subjective reality, an understanding that researchers and their research are inevitably shaped by individual humanness, intent, purpose, and perspective (Eisner, 1991). The goal of research is no

longer an unwavering focus on omniscience; there is now room for multiple perspectives and a type of knowledge building that happens when questions are asked and dialogues are initiated. Postmodernism is not about disregarding traditional approaches to research as much as it is about an openness to adding new approaches to research since it is understood that *knowing* can be carved out in many ways. Instead, methods are seen as fluid, disposed to combination and modification resulting in new tools for newly emerging situations and explorations of subjugated knowledge. In the postmodern world, localized, personal knowing is authentic and valuable (Richardson, 2000a).

Out of this paradigm shift in theoretical thinking came new approaches for conducting research, including autoethnography. In an autoethnography, $n=I$, with that n being both the participant and researcher. With autoethnography's acknowledgement of the self as an unavoidable component of research, it is able to pursue this most direct route of data collection, noting that no one is better able to describe experience and no one will be consumed by an equivalent desire to "figure it all out" than the researcher (Ellis, 1991, p. 30). With this understanding in place, *I* have become the research site of *my* study. I am both principal investigator and study participant.

I have read and read and read about autoethnography as methodology. Truly, chunks of the past year have been devoted to the writings of Anderson (2006, 2011), Bochner (1997, 2000), Bochner and Ellis (2002), Denzin (2006a, 2006b), Denzin and Lincoln (2000); Ellis (1991, 1999, 2004, 2009), Ellis and Bochner (2000) and more. I have been determined to get into the autoethnographic groove. And now sitting in front of the computer, I am angry with myself. I should be able to recite sweeping philosophy

at this point and almost effortlessly begin to sculpt an intellectual chapter three. Gobs of information are scribbled and color-coded in my stack of notes and words ought to be flowing mechanically through my fingers and onto the keyboard. And yet so much of what pops into my head about autoethnography is about me, not the methodology. The self has invaded the scientific undertaking. I sit here staring at the screen, fighting the urge to simply type and send on to my committee, "I have the inside scoop; I myself am a valid and valuable source, worthy of exploration, expression and sharing!" Am I now feeling at a personal level the core of this methodology with its heavy emphasis on its process as much as its product? Have I begun to leave behind some of my learned, safe, and accepted allegiance to the notions of truth and reality?

At the core of an autoethnography lies the researcher's story. Nothing connects us to one another like a story, and likewise nothing connects the present with the past like a story. Stories, accounts of situations and events, have power. Our lives are culturally imbedded, and while some moments in time are ephemeral and slip away with no rooted memory to cultivate a story, other moments certainly leave a visceral mark. These moments are persistent in their nagging and they springboard us with invisible yet determined momentum into our futures. These moments are the moments that fuel epiphanies. These become the stories autoethnographers are apt to explore.

And yet, stories are clearly not enough to generate an autoethnography. The researcher must use the stories as tools to explore cultural experience and work to make that culture more familiar to both insiders and outsiders (Sparkes, 2000). Culture is group-oriented and interactive, and personal accounts, which are inherently woven into

culture, provide backdrops for cultural examination. When combined with analysis and interpretation, stories can thus lead to deeper cultural understanding of self and others. This examination can be undertaken in several ways. The researcher may choose to compare the story against current literature (Anderson, 2011; Ronai, 1995; Ronai, 1996), to work with other members of the culture (Anderson, 2011; Marvasti, 2006), and/or to employ artifacts (Denzin, 2006b). In essence, this highly personalized approach explores life as it is stitched together by patches of experiences, behaviors, and emotions, and through this, the researcher gains deeper cultural understanding.

Important to autoethnography is the concept of reflexivity, which formally acknowledges that researchers cannot be separated from their research and as such must be alert to how they participate--- even interfere--- with that research as it unfolds and as outcomes are revealed (Anderson, 2011; Creswell, 2003). It is a response to reflexivity that the autoethnographer often employs transparent *I* statements. Cunliffe (2003) explains further that reflexivity also questions assumptions; leads to evolving possibilities instead of absolute truth; and ultimately results in research, which is unavoidably open-ended. Researchers are called to repeatedly and recursively consider how different thoughts come about, how beliefs or assumptions thought to be firmly in place are altered because of new understanding, and how those changes affect the overall research.

Today, roughly eight months into my dissertation proposal process, I admit to myself and to anyone who reads this (Oh Boy) that I have an indiscriminate aversion to Germans. That's fancy-pants wording for "I don't really like them."

I am ashamed. I'm not as all loving and as open-minded and as pure as I'd truly believed. Maybe It's an arms-length thing. Maybe It's a matter of mistrust. Maybe It's a matter of control. Not very Christian-like, I get that. Not real sophisticated, I get that. It will come as very disappointing news to my mother as well, I'm sure, and I get that as well.

Where did this come from? I'm one of the good guys, a legitimate kum ba yah do-gooder. I really am.

But I walked around homeless, metaphorically lost in that park, for over a year and nobody came to guide me out. And I couldn't do it on my own. Why not? Why did I expect it? Why do I still care at this point? What would answering these questions mean for me now? How would answering these questions impact my perception of my teacher charge? Could answering these questions affect the profession in general?

I think I have identified a tapeworm that has lived in my belly for 25 years, quietly yet ruthlessly sucking away nutrients of my soul, turning me into something of a paper doll girl. It has persisted. It has poked. It has nibbled away. I am panicked. How does one treat this condition? How does this impact the way I view and tell my story today?

I have shared this with my husband, who simply says this isn't true. As evidence, he points to a German family we zip lined with last Christmas in Costa Rica. He urges me to recall the lengthy and friendly conversations we had in German as we moved together through the jungle. Surely, such extensive conversation with several bouts of laughter would not have happened if I harbored such collective ill will – obviously I've moved on. My husband may have some of this right. I'm certainly capable of moving beyond this – I just don't think I have yet.

“Nope. Sorry. We only have 20 hours a week set aside for one-on-one tutoring for English Language Learners at the college. It’s free tutoring with a highly qualified ESL Specialist, with whom you’ve already been working. We used to have ESL classes but then for financial aid reasons, they could no longer run. If you feel that your English isn’t good enough for mainstream classes, you can always withdraw from the college for a while and enroll in ESL classes at the community college a few blocks down the road.”

“But the college has let me go here, and I’m taking classes here to be a pharmacy technician. I need to find my place here in America; I want to find my place here, it’s a new life, and I am going to school so I can do that. I need more help with my English. It’s only the English that is stopping me from doing good here. I need more help and I know that the other ESL students want more help, too. Please, can’t you help me some more?”

“I’m sorry, but I need to limit ESL hours to two hours a week for everyone. I can’t give you any more help because it isn’t fair to the others. I can refer you to the community college if you want to do work more on your English.”

She is a student with a decent but not exemplary GPA who has emigrated from Eastern Europe and has been enrolled at my college of employ for a while. She looks at me resigned, sighs, and then scoops herself out of her chair and plods out of my office. She pauses outside my door as if she doesn’t know where to go, adjusts her backpack, and then makes her way out of the waiting area and into the main hallway. Not the best of responses, I admit to myself, but seriously, so many of our ELLs come here because we don’t require a TOEFL score as proof of English proficiency like the other schools down

the street, and they are told right from the beginning that we do not offer ESL classes. These students have to figure out that they are responsible for their own language skills. They've just gotta figure it out for themselves. I can't help them. My hands are tied.

Autoethnography re-presents slices of life plucked out of context in terms of both time and place. It does not unfold in a linear fashion just as life is not experienced in a linear fashion, and so an autoethnographic research approach is not predictable or formulaic. Because of this unique positioning, it is often seen as an avant-garde approach to research (Wall, 2006). Because it does not adhere to a cookie cutter process, autoethnographers are free to find their own voices and proportionate emphasis within the writing and research process (graphy), the culture (ethos), and self (auto) (Ellis, 2004; Holman Jones, 2005; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Not surprisingly, then, there is a long continuum of possibility for realizing an autoethnography. Some will stress the autobiography, while others will stress the ethnography.

At one end of this spectrum lies evocative ethnography, championed by Bochner and Ellis (2002), who advocate for an expanded understanding of ethnography, one that connects traditional social science with a creative narrative approach. Being an excellent storyteller and communicator is of highest importance. Evoking an emotional response is key; including a formal analysis often is not. Bochner (1997) encourages the researcher to move beyond the traditional academic self to imbed the personal self into research via complex, creative, and intimate narratives, which emotionally affect readers and generate a lingering impression.

At the other end of this continuum stands analytic ethnography with its emphasis on theoretical explanations of cultural issues. Anderson (2006, 2011) calls for researchers to deliberately and purposefully blend evocative autoethnography with the traditional theoretical layer of analytic ethnography. In doing so, the researcher is meant to be a full member in the research group, whether born into the group or having woven oneself into the group; be visible as that full member in published writing; partake in analytic reflexivity; work with informants beyond the researched self; and be committed to theoretical analysis. This last characteristic is key as the authoethnographer who is positioned at the analytic end of the spectrum will not stop at a description of what is going on but will also move on to a broader empirical application with an eye toward revision or expansion of theoretical understanding.

Most certainly, approaching methodology through the arts displays a researching perspective that is paradigmatically distinct from more typical ways of approaching research. To the researcher employing the arts in his/her work, the advantages often seem obvious. Room must be made for creativity in research if only so research becomes more engaging and appealing to a broader and varied audience. Creative form works to build a vivid picture inside the reader's mind. A vivid picture, or any other creative mode of representation, can breathe fresh life and new meaning on an already explored issue (Eisner, 1993), for it permits the researcher to tap into generated reader emotions and interpretations. For this reason, Richardson (2006) encourages experimentation with form including poetry, responsive readings, and autobiography. Such encouragement, however, does not discount established scientific approaches to academic research but deliberately serves to expand the notion of research conducted via a wide range of

representational forms. The wider the range, the greater the potential for wider and deeper understanding, and the goal of any researcher should be the desire to generate and address new theoretical questions.

However, historically the arts have been understood as emotive, not informational, and far from a legitimate path to knowledge. Yet knowledge can certainly be the product of empathetic evocation, a by-product of the arts because they are expressive and not declarative (Eisner, 2008). As human beings, we are active participants in making meaning, and we inherently employ our senses as we do so. If research goals do not include absolute answers to a question but are instead intended to draw attention to complexities or subtleties within a given cultural scenario, then creative form may not just be a path to pursue; indeed, it may be the best path to pursue. It certainly has the potential to uncover aspects of life traditional linear language cannot unearth. Langer (1957) notes:

I think every work of art expresses, more or less purely, more or less subtly, not feeling and emotions the artist has, but feelings, which the artist knows; his insight into the nature of sentence, his picture of vital experience, physical, and emotive and fantastic. (p. 91)

Crotty (1998) reminds us that postmodernism encourages an eclectic approach to research and is characterized by the elimination of boundaries between routine lived experiences and art as well as the boundary between academic elite and common man. The purpose of art research is neither precision nor consistent interpretation; rather it is a rolling snowball of newly generated questions, ongoing discussions, and a deeper-seeded appreciation of cultural phenomena (Eisner, 2008). Arranging words in new ways or drawing a picture lets us see and feel perceptions and feelings in fresh and perhaps more accessible ways. These fresh perspectives are the result of a deliberate movement away

from old research habits and hence old research interpretations. Interestingly, the result may make what was believed to be completely understood a bit less so, and what was determined to be hopelessly out of focus, begin to take shape. This provides a practical and effective outlet for deeper understanding of our past memories, current interactions in the world, and future hopes and concerns (Cahnmann, 2003; Prendergast, 2006; Richardson, 2000a).

And so poetry, with its innovation, recreates the world with its words and metaphors while corralling its readers to genuinely stop and listen. This is because its interactive form of language, its abandonment of logical, literal wording, requires readers to employ not only their minds but also their hearts and spirits. Kendall and Murry (2005) translated interviews of patients recently diagnosed with lung cancer into poetic representations and noted that study participants reacted differently to the poetic form. They moved through the words more slowly and were focused on the rhythm of the sounds. When the dynamics with which information is presented changes from the expected norm, so too changes the response to that information. Through poetry, the reader interprets independently and is not overtly led to a research conclusion by a researcher functioning as a *sage on the stage*. It challenges and deepens readers' awareness of past experiences and alters the way they tangle with future experiences. Poetry blazes trails to new and different understanding and partners well with autoethnography:

Poetry is a way of knowing, being, and becoming in the world. Poetry begins with attentiveness, imagination, mystery, enchantment. Poetry invites researchers to experiment with language, to create, to know to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience. The poet-researcher seeks to live attentively in the moment, to know the momentousness of each moment, to seek to enter lived

experiences with a creative openness to people, experience, and understandings. (Leggo, 2008, p. 168)

I am convinced that my imagination, my heart, and my soul are as important as my rational mind as I work to navigate and understand my world. Because of this conviction, poetry has a place in my research. The stories I share from my life are meticulously stitched together by intimate, emotive images. No academic wording can fully describe them or convey their meaning. Those stories carry social meaning, meaning that the symbols and metaphors that poetry affords can reach and that trigger a memory or lingering sensation in the soul of the reader.

It is not uncommon for autoethnographers to supplement their stories with visual art for it succinctly yet convincingly conveys individual expression (Ellis, 2004; Sharf, 1995). Since I have started to sketch my experiences, I have learned first-hand that a reconstruction of my memories via image is intuitive, intimate, and very valuable. Like poetry and prose, my sketches can represent connections between parts that comprise or offer clues about a whole, yet they are unique because they *visually* point those things out. The process of sketching permits me to reflect and relate in a distinct way, and the rough drawings I produce provide an outlet for sharing my experiences with others that successfully circumvents the limitations presented by language as an expressive tool (Riddett-Moore, 2013). My audience connects with the images depicted in the pictures in a way that permits a firm grasp at intent but also in a way that encourages further dialog with me and with themselves.

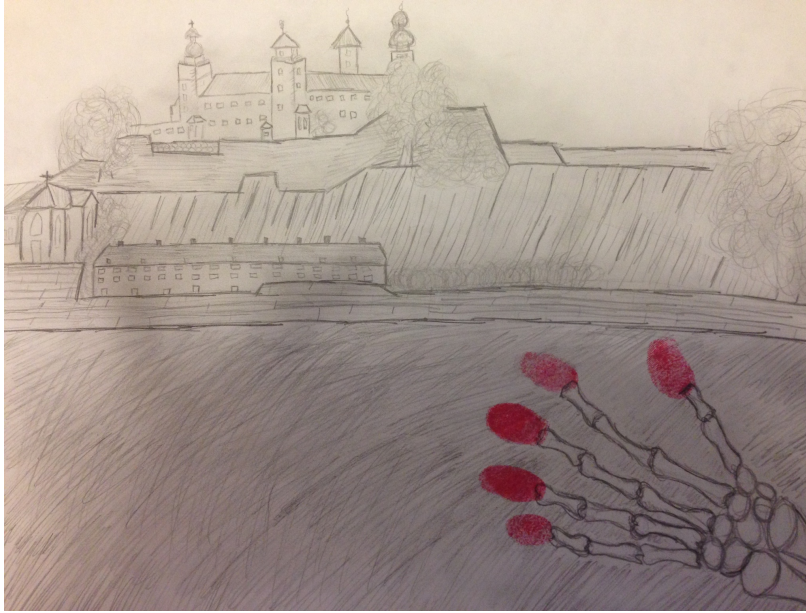


Figure 2: Reaching for the Fortress

I walked a lot in Wuerzburg. One of the most famous landmarks in the city was *Festung Marienberg* (Marienberg Fortress). Because it was up on a hill, I could see it from most parts of town. It was reinforced by layer after layer of medieval wall and was surrounded by well-pruned grapevines, which were harvested every year and used to make some of the most delicious wine (*Frankenwein*) I have ever had. In its day, I'm sure Marienberg Fortress offered those within its walls safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging.

Sometimes, usually on a nice Sunday afternoon, I would set out alone on a walk to the Fortress. It was a way to kill time and to get some fresh air. I didn't have a map, but the Fortress was a visible landmark, and I would simply walk toward it. At any given time on my walk, I wouldn't know exactly where I was, but I still knew I was heading in the right direction.

As I walked, I knew that those who passed me knew I was American by my gait, by the clothes I wore, and by the way I looked them in the eye, and I wondered what they thought of me, if anything. And I wondered why I cared so much.

My research question is the compass guiding my research journey: To what extent, if at all, will an exploration and narrative analysis of both my experience as a sojourner international college student as well as how my emotive response to that experience affected my sense of self, carve out a deeper and more empathetic understanding of my professional charge of assisting multicultural, non-native English speaking students who are striving to reach their post-secondary educational goals?

The scope of my project limits me to a focus on higher education and adult non-native speakers of the language of instruction. This is not a study about second language acquisition per say. It is also not a study on how to effectively teach second languages. It is not a sociological research project on cultural diversity across college campuses. It is instead an intimate study of my own experiences, feelings, and perceptions, subjectively viewed through my eyes. These subjective eyes belong to a White female raised in an upper-middle class family in suburban New York State. In the late 1980s, I moved to Michigan, which is where my career took root and is where I continue to reside today. The scope of my intimate study can be loosely categorized into *then* and *now*.

My *then* stories are my student stories and are focused on my one-year study abroad experience as a 20-year-old college junior in Wuerzburg, West Germany during the 1980s. My undergraduate degree is a BA in German, and all of the courses I took as a student in Wuerzburg, with the exception of the two-month orientation and German

language course, applied to that BA from a state school in New York. The study abroad program was a well established and respected one sponsored by my home institution.

This experience marked my third time in Germany. In Wuerzburg, I lived in a dormitory with Germans, other internationals, and other American students. Upon my arrival in Germany, my level of German was tested and described as mid-upper intermediate across a continuum of beginning, intermediate, and advanced. When I arrived back in the States, my oral and aural skills were described soon thereafter by a professor at my home institution in the U.S. as advanced, and my academic reading and writing skills were upper-intermediate.

My *now* stories are my professional stories, which span my career in ESL tertiary education in the state of Michigan, initially as an ESL instructor and now as an administrator charged with overseeing, among other things, the English language support of my current institution's non-native speakers as they move through their content area classes. My ESL career began in the late 1980s, included a seven-year break to raise children, and continues to unfold today. Some of that career has been full-time, some of it part-time. Some of it has been largely focused on English language learners and some of it only partially. My *now* stories also encompass my time as a doctoral student pursuing my PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus on English as a Second Language, which includes my experience writing an autoethnographic dissertation.

In my study, my primary source of data is personal memory. My data collection method largely involves a recalling and journaling of my memories, mostly done on the weekends sitting at my desk in my office at home. My desk sits under a window and at moments when I ponder or my mind sits still, I find myself looking out that window at

the trees and elementary school yard across the street. The room is quiet; the door is generally shut. More times than not, one of my dogs is sitting at my feet. I write out my memories, my field notes, as they come to me. Sometimes what I write is nothing more than quickly jotted minimalist blurbs. Sometimes what I write is more expansive and detailed.

In preparing this proposal, I have not harvested my memories in chronological order. Instead, following the suggestion of Chang (2008), I conducted early on a set of brainstormed self-inventories (one for *then* and one for *now*), mapping out key words denoting specific personal memories. These inventories became my research launching pad. I ranked (organized) those memories according to how vivid their imprints are on my brain. Sometimes this original brainstorming and follow-up journaling has jolted new memories and new field notes, which I have subsequently pursued.

My journaling amounts to expansive drafted stories based on my initial self-inventory and other memories I've had since I've been writing. I began with those that I ranked more highly in that self-inventory. I write self-reflective thoughts about my field notes in the margins of those stories. While the journaling itself is not objective, for it represents narrative truth and not historical truth, the notes in the margin are highly introspective and subjective interpretations and judgments. Some of these journaled entries evolve into more polished narratives while others--- those that I note in my margined notes as being most emotive, most poignant, or most vivid--- are spun into poems.

As autoethnography does not necessarily unfold in a predictable or mechanical fashion (Chang, 2008), I share with you my plans for moving forward with my research

as they exist today, employing the future tense as I do so. This approach allows the reader to experience autoethnography like an unfolding story. If there is any change to my research strategy as it is described in this chapter, that change will be made explicit in my writing at the time it is developed and applied.

This excavating of memories will be an ongoing process as I move through my project. As new memories pop into my mind, I will explore them. I am also on high alert for new experiences as well, for I am keenly aware that I have not just *lived* my study but am *living* my study. This is because autoethnography is not about lives. It is about life. Moving forward, I will balance out my student stories with more professional stories because my life exists at the line where student and teacher meet and an honest research exploration will not permit me to favor one over the other.

I shall continue to present my work via a layered account, moving between *then* and *now* as well as between my story and theory, all of which are recursively stacked one on top of the other, creating a metaphorical Dagwood sandwich that provides many points of contact for my readers. Movement back and forth across time, between theory and story, and between prose, poetry, and drawing provides evidence of my understanding of autoethnography's complexity and how in some ways it amounts to heading "into the woods without a compass" (Ellis, 2004, p. 120). I decided to employ a layered account after reading the work of Rambo (formerly Ronai) (1995, 1996, 2005a, 2005b, 2007) and recognizing through my emotional and engaged reaction to her layered accounts how powerful an organizational strategy it is.

In my work, I am diligent to assure that each of my layers offers a new dimension. Each must add a new color, merging and blending with the colors already on my

dissertation canvas, all working to represent my complex endeavor, an investigation which would likely be left unexplored in traditional research (Rambo, 2005a). And yet, even though I understand that my work, my painting, will forever remain an unfinished work, I will draw it to a close when I sense a natural pause, perhaps a moment when I simply need to let my story's paint dry. I may garner the advice of my dissertation committee in this, for I acknowledge that outsiders may sense this natural pause before I do. The fact that my work is an ever-evolving entity is not problematic nor does it indicate a flaw in my work, for the partial understanding it will generate is valuable understanding in and of itself (Richardson, 2000b).

Because memory changes over time, it cannot be relied upon too heavily as a source of data (Muncey, 2010), and so I will seek to triangulate my *then* data with a box of memories and photos from my time in Germany and with interviews with my parents. Likewise, I will attempt to triangulate my *now* data with further conversation with my parents and miscellaneous artifacts uncovered from my career including presentations and documents I have kept on file. My strategy aligns with common suggestions to supplement memories with photographs, documents, and various artifacts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Hayler, 2011; Muncey, 2010).

I have considered important ethical issues pertaining to my research. My stories are cultural and thus inherently include others. To respect the privacy of those individuals, all names of people mentioned in my work, whether they are a part of my story or a part of my triangulation strategy, will be assigned pseudonyms. In instances where identities are obvious, process consent will be employed in accordance with university IRB requirements. Further, at the suggestion of Ellis (2004), I consistently

weigh the potential contribution my work may make against any potential distress to self or others, and if I deem a story to be inappropriately distressful, it will be modified or eliminated.

I position myself along the spectrum of autoethnography closer to the analytic end than the evocative end. Like others (Anderson, 2006; Clough, 2000; Duncan, 2004; Sparkes, 2000; Vryan, 2006), I am not comfortable without a layer of traditional academia included as a part of my professional work; an emotional response is powerful, but for me it is not enough, and so I look to support my subjective story with analysis and theory. Indeed, even Ellis (2004), a champion of evocative autoethnography, has suggested how analysis may be effectively employed in an autoethnography:

The author might or might not decide to add another layer of analysis by stepping back from the text and theorizing about the story from a sociological, communicational, or other disciplinary perspective ...treating stories as data and using analysis to arrive at themes that illuminate the content and hold within or across stories. (p. 196)

As I work to make sense of my story, I will employ thematic analysis and will look for explanatory patterns across my own experiences and perceptions. This approach will be inductive and recursive; theories are meant to naturally emerge by virtue of the collected data (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010; Pace, 2012). My analysis will align with the assertions of Charmaz (2000): In my research role, I will only develop *one* understanding or *one* reality instead of *the* understanding or *the* reality; in my research role, I acknowledge my bias and subjectivity; and in my research role, I will not provide generalizable truth, but will instead propose ideas that may spur new questions and further research. As I search for patterns and an understanding, a specific type of triangulation will come into play: patterns and understanding which appeal to my student

self, my professional self, and my emotional self. As I analyze, I will create domains, elicit taxonomies, and uncover meaning according to the process laid out by McCurdy, Spradley and Shandy (2005).

My research is valid. Eisner (1991) describes research as useful when readers are able to better understand a confusing situation or ponder a previously overlooked or tacitly understood situation in a way that helps them envision future application or relevance. I strive for my work to speak to readers in a way that makes their lives richer and influences better understanding and communication with those non-native speakers whose lives on college campuses are different from theirs. When this happens, the work is valid (Ellis, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). For this reason, I periodically conduct unscientific litmus tests of my project's validity and ask trusted colleagues and close friends --- both native English speaking Americans and transplanted non-native English speakers --- to read and then provide feedback. I listen carefully to what they say, particularly those things that describe their level of engagement, images created in their minds, the degree to which they weave my experiences into theirs, and whether or not they have gained personal insight.

Validity is defined by usefulness, personal generalizability, and not absoluteness. McIlveen (2008) asserts that an autoethnographer's work is valid if it blends theory and autobiography in a way that is faithful to the author's experience, if it is a catalyst for deeper understanding in the author, and if it informs readers of new experiences with future applicability. Some might argue that autoethnography, with its emphasis on the individual, has no broad application, yet Richardson (2006) notes that the lens examining

life has the uncanny ability to cross over from one person to another. Clearly, my reader is critical to the validity of my autoethnography.

All of this is my plan. This is how I intend to manifest the characteristics of a successful autoethnography. According to Spry (2001), this means my work must be “...well-crafted and capable of being respected by critics of literature as well as by social scientists and...emotionally engaging as well as critically self-reflexive of one’s sociopolitical interactivity” (p. 713).

However, despite having a deliberate plan in place, this project is inherently flexible, and I may find myself changing direction at any point. This is part of the autoethnographic challenge. This is a part of the autoethnographic mystery. My project is a journey not a limited jaunt, and the road I travel while on this journey goes on and on. I have not lived my story. I am living my story. I clearly understand the need to remain open to changing dynamics as well as the need to adjust strategies in real time in response to changing dynamics. Small things may become big. Big things may become small. The autoethnographic process is murkier than it is linear (Ellis, 2004), but I will find my way, even if there are false starts and the occasional need to shift gears and move in a different direction.

While the rigor of my research has been aptly described and defended, I must bluntly acknowledge its limitations. I acknowledge that my work is the subjective interpretation of *my* philosophy and *my* experiences. I also understand that new knowledge and carved-out understanding is specific to me and to my situation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). My work is very personal and very intimate, and as such, no reader could ever fully grasp its meaning; that meaning can only be an interpretation (Tierney, 1998).

When all of this is considered, I recognize that while my research can certainly spur new intellectual and empathetic perspective in readers, it is not likely to produce far-reaching, generalizable understanding (McIlveen, 2008).

I also accept that the narrative and poetic writings of my personal experiences simply may not be of significant interest to the research world. Even though autoethnography is increasingly entrenched in the scientific world, writing an autoethnography still means taking a professional risk, for it is often met with criticism and rejection (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Sparkes, 2000; Wall, 2006).

There was no effort to hide the look of confusion and near disgust on his face.

*“...and then I open up your attachment and begin to read and I see this James Joyce wanna-be stuff and my thought was like **whoa, man, what is this?** I need you to send me all of the latest stuff you have, and we need to talk about this because, I gotta tell you, I have some serious concerns here. Now, I’m not saying your poetry is bad necessarily. I’m just saying I don’t know what the heck this stuff is. **Whoa.** I’m afraid you’ve got some serious work to do. When I read this, I was like **whoa....**”*

My face flushed in embarrassment as I looked at my colleague from my doctoral program.

“I’m completely enchanted. I can’t wait to read more,” she said with a smile and encouraging nod of her head, “I’ve never read anything like this.”

“Agreed. This autoethnography stuff is really interesting, and I’m curious to see where you are going to take this. Keep sending us things as you go.”

My face flushed with relief as my two friends gave me their stamp of approval.

I have emailed my advisor and told her I was no longer afraid of doing an autoethnography.

“My head is spinning. I can’t do this. It’s just not me,” I say to my husband one evening. “Anyone who has written a dissertation and has been courageous enough- or stupid enough- to take a DIY stab at a creative outlet of expression has to know how lost I feel right now! What was I thinking? Grrrrr!!!”

“You’re doing just fine,” says my husband, “go back and work a while longer.”

“I don’t want to. I want to quit. Here. Read this. I’m so frustrated and slap-happy. I don’t want to do this anymore. I’m tired of being tired and not knowing what I’m doing.”

I push my computer his way and he focuses on my snarky poetic rebellion:

Write Now

Just write, let it all hang out

Get it down as it pops into your head

Put the books away and write

It’s all right to let it flow

Just write

Just write, all right?

Right on!

And so I write, and I put my books away

But it's simply not all right

It has all gone right off track

I am no poet!

I cannot write!

I can't do this right at all!

You say it's going to be all right

Oh...right...I hope you're right

I grunt, I groan, I do it again and again

I just want to write right, all right?

This doesn't feel right.

Is that all right?

"Well," my husband says as he chuckles, "it's a little Dr. Seuss for my personal taste, but I don't think you're lost. I think this is just a part of the journey, as you keep calling it. My guess is that your frustration is just normal stuff. Keep going. I'll bring you a cup of decaf."

He leaves and I reread what I'd written in chapter one about poetry, and my eye catches the following:

I appreciate the power of poetry. For me, a good poem is enchanting, a sensory jolt that pushes me far, far away from indifference.

“Well,” I think, “I’m not indifferent. That’s for sure.” I lean back in my chair, sigh, and press on. I hear the coffee brewing off in the kitchen. The plod continues.

CHAPTER 4: MUSICAL CHAIRS

Musical Chairs

Around and around a circle of chairs we march

We are a line of girls in party dresses and thick yarn ribbons

Our movement is synchronized, we look like a team

The birthday girl's mom plays the music

Every beat is absorbed, every sound is magnified, every chair has doubled in size

We have never listened so closely, our senses are turbo-charged

Stop!

Everyone scurries for new position

When it's all done, most of us are seated

Most of us have a place

Except for one- the one who stands, the one who is out

That one blushes bright red and purses her lips, any past victory is null and void

That one retreats to a corner, evicted, unable to play until the next birthday party

And the music starts again

Someday, I decide from my view in the corner,

I want to be the birthday girl's mom

She doesn't march, she just plays the music again and again

Stop!

Actually, when I'm the birthday girl's mom, it'll be completely different

The girls in party dresses won't play musical chairs at all.

They'll poke tails onto a donkey instead.

When I was in the second grade, I went to Valerie Schneider's birthday party and was the first one out when we played Musical Chairs. I sat in a nearby corner and cried. I'd been convinced that I was going to win --- or at least almost win. Mrs. Schneider couldn't cheer me up even when she gave me a box of colored chalk. For the rest of the party, I just watched the games and said politely that I didn't want to play. The party was not at all what I had anticipated.

This exploration is spreading and moving deeper into my personal frontier. While the memories of Germany continue to bubble up, it feels like it's the right time to deliberately start moving forward along life's timeline so as to explore themes and connections of those German memories with my later experiences of being an ESL professional. I know any outcome of this exploration is likely impermanent, yet I find myself searching for a new personal bottom line, one that makes sense to me and informs me, not just as a professional, but also as a human being at this moment in time.

Today, a little more than a decade after my study abroad experience, my sons and I are in the midst of a one-month German adventure, and we plod through the streets of Nuremberg while 'Daddy' spends the day at the headquarters of the German company he works for. My oldest is a three-year-old preschooler and my youngest is not yet one. This was a city I'd visited on a regular basis as a student all those years ago, for I had

always loved its historic architecture as well as its multi-storied department stores. The streets feel different from the last time I was here. I now hear many more Eastern European languages and far less English. The Wall is down and The Cold War is over.

The pedestrian zone is clogged, and a woman in a long laden green coat begins to pass me on my right. She takes a double take at my double stroller with its front and back seat arrangement, which is different from the standard German side-by-side seat arrangement. She smiles at my boys. She slows her pace down and begins to speak with me in German, telling me my sons are happy and cute, and she comments on the practicality of my stroller's engineering, noting that it is likely easy to steer. She asks where I got the stroller because she's never seen one like this, and I tell her I'm American. She stops altogether in the middle of the street, ignoring the crowds, which now must flow around her, and she talks a bit of her travels to New York and Florida. She then asks about where I'm from and why I'm here and how it is that I know German. She looks me in the eye as we talk and nods periodically to indicate that she is listening to what I say. We talk a bit more and then I ask her about a good place to go and have some lunch. She walks me a few blocks out of her way to make sure I find the place she has in mind. She waves good-bye, tells me she hopes I enjoy the rest of my trip, and then she disappears back into the busy pedestrian zone.

I wonder why this small gesture of kindness has remained such a vivid memory after all these years. Who, after all, hasn't made small talk with strangers? Who hasn't sought directions or *things to do* tips from locals when on a vacation? I've interacted with others in this fashion time and time again, and so logic tells me that this pedestrian

zone memory should now be fuzzy at best. Yet, it is this particular instance, this particular interaction all those years ago with the woman in loden green in Nuremberg, Germany, which I can most quickly pull out of my memory bank from that month-long return trip.

Maybe it remains vivid because of its accompanying sensation of mild surprise, the feeling I tend to have when I'm momentarily knocked off-kilter --- when life unexpectedly pushes me off of my expected or routine path. When I say I am knocked off-kilter, I'm referencing a physical sensation that radiates out from the pit of my stomach as I recognize that "Huh, *this* isn't going the way I thought it would." Sometimes a second of dizziness passes through me as I grope to quickly assess and regain my bearings. Emotionally, when I'm knocked off-kilter, I'm referencing a feeling of discomfort and a sensation of being out of control as I quickly assess my surroundings and work to gain solid footing. As I've matured, I've learned that these moments aren't meant to be ignored or conceptualized as problems per se, but need to be embraced as valuable opportunities for generating awareness about what makes me and those around me *tick*.

As I look back on this persistent memory of the woman in loden green, I realize now that I was knocked a bit off-kilter that day.

You see, I had prepped myself for a continued cool response from the Germans this subsequent trip. Because of this, I was in defensive mode, prepared to click into my cocktail response of external acquiescence mixed with internal contestation. But the woman in loden green swam upstream against that anticipated scenario and inadvertently

caught me off guard. I had indeed been knocked off-kilter. What to her was likely a random act of kindness, has now generated a significant point of contemplation for me.

So what changed between my time in Germany as a student and this return visit? Maybe some of this simply represents historical timing and how that impacted German reception of me as an American. Nolan (2005) speaks of a spike in German criticism of American political policies during the 1980s, the time when I was a student abroad, and while this tension was particularly acute as it pertained to the environment, capitalism, and Soviet relations, there remained nonetheless an ongoing appreciation of American mass culture. From my perspective as a student in West Germany, I never knew what to expect in the dormitory's communal television room, for on one evening, Germans watching the freshly released *Miami Vice* (the American show had been dubbed into German) would cling to the action on the screen, even asking me what was going to happen in future episodes, while the next evening, as the latest information about the Iran-Contra Affair played out on the evening news, mindsets changed and hateful comments about America and Americans flowed freely from the same mouths. I think it was this latter frame of mind that led the German in my dormitory stairwell to turn off the lights and leave me stranded in the dark, as the clue behind her intent lies in the specific word choice in her comment "Good night, *American*." When I think back on my conversation with the American soldier, the conversation that unfolded while I battled my melting pistachio ice cream, I can picture the look of bitterness on that soldier's face as he said, "For all we've done for them, I don't know why they treat us like this. There's a lot of American money around here." His comments lead me to believe that he, too, had

heard similar hateful comments about Americans, and I wonder if some of those comments, delivered to a young male with an obvious military haircut wearing Nike sneakers and speaking American English, might have had a harsher edge to them.

On the other hand, when I had returned to Germany and met the woman with the loden green coat during the early 1990s, the Wall had come down and the Cold War had been declared over. East and West Germany had merged and there was a focused excitement about that reunification. I remember watching a documentary at that time on German TV and how it showed the rapid pace of construction in the eastern part of the country. I heard people talk about moving the country's capital from Bonn to Berlin. I sensed that Americans in general were no longer in the same hot seat as they had been during my sojourner experience. Again, Nolan (2005) confirms that this brief pocket of time, the time between the end of the Cold War and the start of America's long war in Iraq, was a time of closer relations between Germany and the U.S. and a warmer reception of America and Americans in Germany, largely because Germany had turned inward to reinvent itself and no longer had conflicts with the U.S. pertaining to the Soviet Union. Perhaps my experience with the woman in the loden green coat was a product of the political times.

And so by retracing my steps in Germany, I can understand that perceptions held by members of a host culture can shape the experiences of long-term visitors and immigrants, and I see how a deeper understanding of immigrant reception is key to both positive community reactions to an influx of immigrants as well as the fruitful adjustment of the immigrants themselves (Fussell, 2014; Jensen, 2006). As my story works to demonstrate, receptivity by a host culture is impacted by distinct factors outside the

desire or goals of the long-term visitor or individual immigrant. These factors include politics and the policies of the host government (local and federal); the health of the host country's labor market and how the immigrant contributes to that market; and the extent to which the immigrant can blend in or pass as a native-born resident (Devine, 2006; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Prins & Toso, 2012). Further, as I again consider my various stays in Germany, I note that the reception of outsiders by a host culture is indeed fluid across both context and time, generating perhaps *warmth* at one point and *coolness* at another (Blumer, 1958).

Clearly, the context and geographic particularities of immigrant reception can vary greatly. For example, the historic American perception that Mexicans are low-status immigrants has been pervasive:

Their long and continuous history as labor migrants destined to jobs at the bottom of the economic hierarchy and their historic placement at the bottom of the racial hierarchy, preceded by the conquest of the original Mexican inhabitant, in what is now the U.S. Southwest, have created a distinct racial category of 'Mexican' in the popular imagination (Ortiz & Telles, 2012, pp. 41-42).

Portes and Rumbaut (2006) describe American discrimination that traps immigrants in jobs deemed appropriate or typical for their immigrant group, noting, for example, the notion of "Mexican work" as being perceptually low-wage and menial (p. 94). Ortiz and Telles (2012) add that Mexican immigrants are often overlooked for promotions at work. Prins and Toso's 2012 study of immigrants in rural Pennsylvania highlights the various conceptions of different immigrant groups who have settled in the studied community, finding specifically that while Latino and Russian immigrants were most often perceived as poorly integrated and resistant to learning English, community members, perhaps as a response to broader contemporary focus on undocumented immigration, also believed

that most Spanish-speaking immigrants in their community were there illegally. I look back on my memory of the homeless Mexican girl with the baby and two brothers who had disappeared from her classes at the institution where I currently work. Her mother and aunt had been deported and her brothers had been her primary source of childcare. She has since re-enrolled at the college and has shared with her advisor that she struggled to find someone whom she could trust to help her find a job and a place to live because she was afraid of being accused herself of being in the United States illegally despite having been born here.

Cohen and Chavez (2013) have studied the reception of Latinos in the Columbus, Ohio area and have indicated that the American population in Columbus often views Latinos as a threat, and because of this perception, both subtle and obvious acts of hostility toward Latinos are not uncommon. One participant in this study, Teresa, a student at a local college who indicated she was more proficient in English than Spanish, described how she often received poor customer service in businesses and other public locations, mostly, she felt, because she had a slight accent and darker skin (Cohen & Chavez, 2013). As I review my ESL career in my mind, I think of one student I've worked with in particular, who shows that such hostility is not limited to Columbus, Ohio.

“I know I am really late, but my day...I missed my class this morning, too...I don't know if you have time now...I can go....” said Angelica as she points her finger in the direction she had just come from. She is pale and very distressed.

Angelica has been one of my regulars for over a year, and because we have spent so much time together working one-on-one, I had gotten to know her at a personal level. She is from Mexico and had come to the United States soon after finishing high school. She has family in Colorado and lives in a nearby community with her husband and two young daughters. On occasion, she brings her daughters with her for her tutoring appointments, and so I had started to keep a drawer with coloring books, crayons, and a few small things to play with. Angelica, who had once owned a Mexican restaurant nearby, makes a mean mole and on occasion brings me containers of it and other goodies.

I had never seen Angelica like this and I quickly wave her into my office. She closes the door behind her --- another first.

“What is going on? What’s wrong with you?” I ask.

“I don’t know what to do. You won’t believe it. It’s so bad. I don’t know what to do. I don’t know what to do. I need to tell someone, but this is bad. It is so bad. You won’t believe it. You won’t believe it,” she rambles. There are no tears and her voice is level, but her eyes and repetition of her words showed how scared she is.

“My husband...it’s our neighbor. He plays loud music and parks a huge truck in his driveway and part of it is always on our property. My husband went over last weekend to tell him he had to be quiet with his party. We heard bad, loud noises last night and my husband went outside and our neighbor had smashed our metal garbage cans into my husband’s truck. He did a lot of damage! You wouldn’t believe it. He dented my husband’s truck! My husband was so angry! My husband went outside and started to yell at our neighbor and told him he would have to pay for the damage. The

neighbor said that our insurance could pay for it, and my husband yelled back that my neighbor would pay for it because what he did was vandalism. The neighbor said that we probably didn't have insurance because people like us just don't get insurance. Then he said that we were ruining the neighborhood and screamed that if we don't like his music, we should go back to Mexico. Then they started to fight physically, you know, hitting each other and things like that. The police came and arrested them both. The neighbor was back home this morning. I saw him when I took my daughter to school. But I had to wait to see my husband. When I finally saw him he looked bad. His eye was black and I could tell his shoulder was hurt. He tried to tell me he was fine, but I know him, he is in pain...."

I let Angelica talk for as long as she wants.

"You know," she says, "I work so hard here. When I first came here, I worked in an upholstery factory six days a week. When I got married, my husband and I had a restaurant and we worked so hard. Now he has a brick paver business and I'm in school. And someday I'm going to own a restaurant again. We get angry when someone who doesn't know us says we are lazy or stupid or don't do what it is we are supposed to do just because we are Mexican. And I really hate it when somebody thinks I don't have the right to be here. I work hard. I pay taxes just like everybody else here. It isn't fair. It really isn't fair," she says as she crosses her arms and sets her jaw.

As my eyes go back and reread this story about Angelica, I quickly note that the anger she describes when someone insults and labels her because she is Mexican is the same emotion felt by the participant Teresa in the Cohen and Chavez study (2013). Like

Teresa, Angelica's English is accented and her skin color is a physical clue of her Mexican background. Both Angelica and Teresa are well versed in English and are earning college degrees, but neither language nor academic effort is apparently important enough to hold insulting behavior at bay.

However, as I read yet again this story about Angelica, my attention shifts onto me and my specific actions. That afternoon I sat behind my desk and said very little. In fact, I distinctly remember nodding a lot and threading in occasional verbal markers that indicated I was listening. I know it would be easy to say that I remained quiet and in listening mode because I knew that Angelica needed a shoulder to cry on. Frankly, though, I was quiet because I had nothing to say. Well, there was nothing I wanted to say. Escalating conflicts in an inner-city neighborhood, brushes with the law, working six days a week at a sewing machine in an upholstery factory --- in all honesty, I found that distasteful, and I wanted to remain far apart from it.

As I look back on this, I don't like the teacher I was(n't) at that moment, and I am drawn to explore this more deeply.

And so I look back in time to see how my experience in Germany might provide insight into the various drivers and consequences related to this experience with Angelica. One particular memory, a memory I shared while eating ice cream with that GI one summer evening in Germany, immediately jumps to mind.

I stand in line at a German neighborhood grocery store, having just placed my food on the counter at the check out. Ahead of me is an elderly woman who is exchanging money with the cashier. I think this walk to the corner store has constituted

something of a social outing for her, or perhaps she has combined this errand with an event on her calendar, for her hair is done up just so and she had taken time to carefully apply makeup. Her red lipstick is fresh and adds a healthy brightness to her face. She has on a long, camel brown coat with a beautiful silk scarf tied around her neck. She looks at me and smiles, noting a container of milk-rice I am purchasing by saying that that she is buying some, too. I tell her it's one of my favorite foods. She smiles at me again and her eyes sparkle. She reminds me of my Grandma.

Suddenly, we hear a long and piercing cry, and the lady and I turn to look behind us. We see an angry-looking employee with his hands on his hips and two police officers dragging a female customer away from the small, refrigerated section of the store. As the woman screams in broken German that she has only pocketed a cheap package of meat and that she just wants to feed her children, one of the officers adjusts his grip and starts to pull her along by her hair. Screams of panic and explanation are replaced by shrieks of pain.

The older lady and I watch as the woman is moved down an aisle and into a back room. From the back room, we hear various bangs and smacks intermingled with sobs and pleas for forgiveness.

I turn back around and look to the elderly woman in line next to me hoping there would be some sort of directive about what I should be doing in this situation. I'm 19 years old. This is very unfamiliar territory for me, and I am scared. For the third time, this woman looks at me and smiles kindly. Her brown teeth contrast with the red lipstick as she casually says, "These foreigners, they should all just leave," and then she waves her hand in the air as if she is dismissing them.

My eyes get big, and I catch my breath. I hadn't anticipated this. Continued sobs from the back of the store add to my deep discomfort and confusion. I panic, wondering if the old woman has picked up on my American accent, but I quickly decide she hasn't. However, I suspect that the cashier has noted my foreigner status, for she pauses for a second to catch my reaction to the elderly woman's comment. I can't seem to do anything but stare downward in stunned silence. I don't look up or say anything as the old lady casually picks up her bag and says "Auf Wiedersehen!" on her way out.

I pay for my groceries as quickly as I can and leave. As I begin to make my way home, I begin to move from shock to anger. How dare she let me think she's anything like my Grandma?!?

Even on the surface, these two distinct stories are similar enough to make me wonder why I hadn't connected them before. However, the similarities go beyond police and host country natives who say mean things about foreigners. The similarities go far beyond unexpected plot twists to mundane life routines.

Power comes about via complex human interactions across multiple cultural networks (Buendia, 2000). Power generates, as Laughter (2011) notes, a system of unearned, yet assumed privilege. Any single privileged individual is unable to nullify his/her assigned privilege, for it is the overarching culture, which generates and sustains that privilege (McEvoy, 2013). Powerful groups of people are socially privileged, not because they are conceptualized as privileged, but because they are conceptualized as the standard or as normal; conversely, groups with less privilege are broadly stereotyped as

inferior (Pratto & Stewart, 2012). Privilege then works deeply to regulate one's behavior toward others, conceptions of the world, and sense of self (McEvoy, 2013).

I have moved through my life without considering this, assuming instead that I was simply a constant *me* no matter where or when. However, in my interactions with Angelica, it was I who had been culturally assigned a position of privilege, a position of perceived cultural normalcy, and it was my position, which worked to shape my reaction to her story. When I encountered the old woman in the grocery store in Germany, it was she, not necessarily I, who was socially privileged, and while I didn't intellectually or academically wrap my head around what had happened, I knew it because I felt it. And yet, without being conscious of it, I think I also knew that perhaps my fair skin, my strawberry blond hair, and my blue eyes counted for some degree of privilege as I had left open the possibility that I might remain undetected if my accent hadn't given me away. The dark-haired, dark-skinned woman dragged into the back room of the grocery store had physical indications that made her foreigner status even more apparent.

Not surprisingly, the societal promotion of power and group affiliation is more psychologically suited for dominant groups than for underprivileged groups (Pratto & Stewart, 2012). If superior social positioning and power are viewed as normal, power may not be readily identified as an obvious privilege; indeed, those with privilege may not recognize their privileged position, yet may note and label the underprivileged as inferior. In fact, a foundational privilege inherent to dominant standing is that there is no need to become aware of that standing or the specific privileges afforded by that standing (Du Bois, 1897; Wildman, 2013). As an ESL professional --- a White, English-speaking American professional --- listening to Angelica that day, my thoughts didn't focus on me

being *more than*, or *powerful*, or *privileged*, or even *normal*. I had never considered myself as especially privileged. Instead my assessment of the situation subtly yet assuredly moved directly onto Angelica, and a quiet but influential wave of distaste moved through me. As I ponder this, it becomes clear to me how those who have privilege may refer to the less advantaged in a fashion that highlights specific traits and attributes with which the privileged themselves do not identify, thus generating a source of esteem through a disassociation from minoritized group members (Houston & Andreopoulou, 2003).

In the U.S., the cultural ideology of Whites is widely assumed to be embraced by all, leaving those who are disadvantaged to struggle with how they might fit in and influence cultural practice and policy (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Whiteness cannot be viewed as a straightforward racial category, but must be understood as a deeply imbedded social construction providing significant advantage. Laughter (2011) views Whiteness as a “socially constructed system of conscious/unconscious, intentional/accidental, explicit/implicit privilege associated with those who manifest certain characteristics labeled White, characteristics that evolve within a racialized society” (2010, p. 44).

An individual member of the privileged group may unknowingly propagate dominance, a symptom of the privilege itself. Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, and Malle (1994) indicate that social dominance orientation (SDO) refers to how much an individual tolerates or supports group privilege and dominance as opposed to equality and inclusion, and indicates that it is SDO which motivates individuals in the dominant group to hold ideologies in favor of maintaining that group dominance. As such, Pratto and Stewart (2012) indicate that dominant groups typically score higher on SDO than

underprivileged groups and note that both those with and without privilege who have low SDO scores are more likely to oppose group privilege.

And so this scholarship works to generate personal clarity as I sift through both my encounter with the elderly lady in Germany and my experience decades later with Angelica as a seasoned ESL professional. My stories work together to show what I sensed and how I reacted to positioning on both sides of the power and privilege wall. As a student in a grocery store check out lane in Germany, I turned to an older woman, someone whom I thought was going to be a reliable source of comfort at a time when I really needed to be comforted and reassured. But this elderly woman, who obviously didn't provide that needed comfort and assurance, demonstrated instead a high social dominance orientation. Perhaps in that old lady's mind, the shoplifting incident was readily explained by a presumed inferiority of the shoplifter, a readily identified foreigner by virtue of the accented German she spoke and the dark skin and hair she could not hide. The old lady showed through her never-ending smile and calm demeanor that she wasn't particularly surprised or upset by how this shoplifting incident unfolded, perhaps because the event served to reinforce presumptions about foreigners that had already existed in her mind. Maybe in the old lady's mind, foreigners were the type of people who would steal. Perhaps she felt that foreigners were just the type of people who would be at the receiving end of rough police treatment and caught up in a chaotic public display. These presumptions might have led her to her verbalized solution to this situation, i.e. that those metaphorically distanced from her ought to also be physically distanced from her. Foreigners should leave the country. For her, this solution flowed so very easily, with thoughtless automaticity out of her mouth, indicating that her perspective was, as the

literature asserts, conscious yet unconscious, intentional while also accidental, and explicit while concurrently implicit (Laughter, 2011).

And had I, another foreigner with accented German, been accused of shoplifting, the casual, dismissive reaction of this old woman may well have been the same. That shocked me. That scared me. That hurt me. A lot.

I, a foreigner within hearing range of her comments, was immediately aware of the sting her words produced, and I digested them at a deeply personal level, viewing them as a deliberately crafted insult, loaded with a blunt intention to increase the gap between those who are powerful and those who are not.

That sting was fueled by a socially established hierarchy, an inequality that engendered more favor on some human beings than others (Parsons, 2001). In Germany, I felt that I didn't enjoy the same degree of social favor as I had known back home. I believed that how I was perceived as a human being clashed with what was valued by people I encountered. I felt a new, unfamiliar, and persistent rhythm to my day, a muddy area somewhere between inclusion and exclusion. Historically, I'd always been a *have*, yet for the first time, I felt the sting of being a *have not*. To be sure, I felt this in my own way as it was woven into my own unique experiences. But I am certain that Angelica knows that feeling as well, most certainly through that experience with her neighbor, but in other ways as well, perhaps through subtle messages sent by me.

As Angelica's teacher, it was I who was on the empowered side of the power and privilege wall. Ignorant of it, I kept myself at a distance, which meant that I did not hear Angelica's cries for support and clarity, for she sat in my office and exemplified the minoritized struggle with how to act, how to fit it, how to navigate cultural practice and

policy (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Like the elderly woman from the grocery store in Germany, I demonstrated in this particular scenario a high social dominance orientation, for as I listened to Angelica speak, my mind did not go to her as a business owner, a homeowner, or a speaker of multiple languages, all of which were accurate touch points we shared. While I recognized a personal connection between us that went beyond traditional teacher/student rapport, I denied the possibility of connecting with her story, assuming that this was something I wasn't going to relate to. While nothing flowed out of my mouth with thoughtless automaticity, there was an automaticity of disassociation at play in my mind. Without recognizing its existence, I felt comfortable and wanted to have that metaphorical wall in place separating us (Houston & Andreopoulou, 2003).

When that wall worked for me, I didn't even know it was in place. When that wall didn't work in my favor, I was scared, crushed, insulted, and ran away to lick my wounds.

A few weeks back, I received a listserv email informing me of the death of Dr. William H. Watkins, an influential researcher in the field of education, particularly in the areas of African-American education and social justice (M. F. He, personal communication, August 6, 2014). I read the email, clucked under my breath an acknowledgement that this was a loss in the field, noted the blessing of the peaceful circumstances of his death, and moved on to the next email in my in-box. A few days later, a follow-up email written by Dr. Edward Podsiadlik, a past student of Dr. Watkins, was forwarded to my in-box and flashed large on my computer screen pronouncing, "Dr. Watkins articulated a passion to expose what W. E. B. Du Bois called the 'shadow of the

veil' and to liberate those around him from 'careless ignorance'" (M. F. He, personal communication, August 12, 2014). Those words crawled in under my skin and have created a lingering, undeniable sting.

Laughter (2011) indicates that critical reflections about Whiteness are not common occurrences among Whites in the U.S. This means I am far from unique, for I have never deeply considered how my being White impacts my daily routine, affects the way I view the world, or influences my interactions with those around me. For that matter, I've not deeply considered how others might be more alert to the implications of their race, their ethnicity, their language, their sexual preference, and/or their socio-economic class than I, and yet Pratto and Stewart (2012) report in their findings that African-American and Hispanic participants in their study were more aware of their ethnicity than Americans of European descent. Likewise, Hartmann, Gerteis, and Croll (2009) show that those who are ethnically minoritized rate their racial identity as higher and more important than Whites did in the same survey. When one's White racial identity is carved out, that individual commonly starts out oblivious to issues of race and privilege and moves through various emotive stages in the process of discovery including fear, guilt, and anger before either shifting back into their familiar zone of Whiteness or making an authentic commitment to equality (Barraclogh & McMahon, 2013). I admit it. Up until now, I have been pretty much oblivious.

However, the discovery of my Whiteness is now underway, and as Barraclogh and McMahon (2013) predicted, emotions are bubbling to the surface. At the same time, I recognize that I am experiencing first hand both the power and the personal risk of an autoethnography (Ellis, 2004), for recognizing the importance of this discovery is a

powerful epiphany, one that leaves myself publicly vulnerable to criticism about how I have lived and about how I will live moving forward.

I recognize that I --- my soul, my essence of me --- am enshrouded in a veil, which does indeed cast a shadow and affect my view on the world. It took me until today, as a 47-year-old in the midst of deliberate, scheduled thought and analysis, to deeply and intimately consider my White Middle-Class English-Speaking Americanism and how that limits me and my effectiveness as a professional and human being, for I cannot view without obstruction that which exists beyond that veil. I differ from others in profound ways that obviously matter, not just in terms of society but for me as well, and those differences have resulted in a personal myopic view, at times stunting how I interact with others both in the classroom and beyond.

I suppose I could defend myself and say that this veil has been so eloquently woven and drapes so delicately across my face that I have been unaware of its existence. Yet, over the years, classroom lectures, conversations with professors and articles in journals have unsuccessfully tipped me off to it, and I didn't pause to deeply consider its personal relevance. Nothing had seeped in past my cerebral epidermis. And so I have been careless, ignorantly assuming that I am the standard, the preferred member of society.

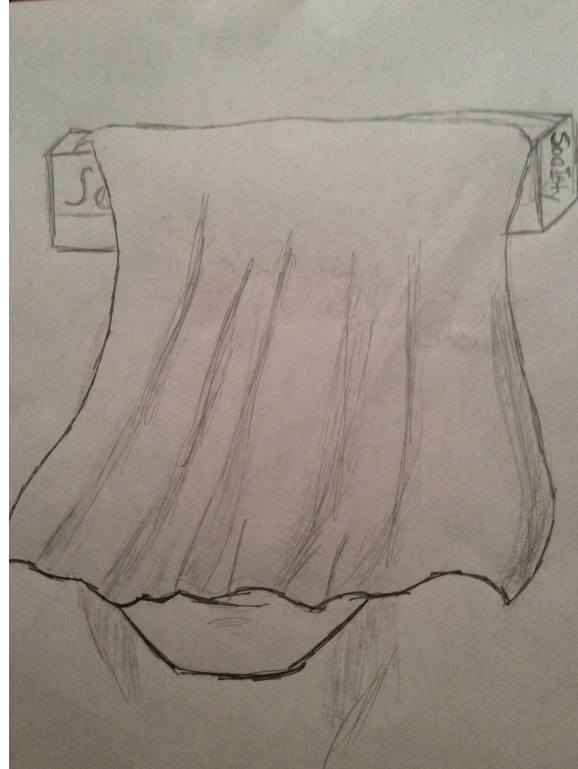


Figure 3: Enshrouded in a Veil

This has all been completely off my radar; a careless ignorance has obviously been at play, and for that, I am deeply, deeply embarrassed. No, I am ashamed. I cry.

And yet, I am able to see this in some ways in a positive light, for through this *A-ha* moment, I have a great opportunity to evolve into the cultural being I want to be. As a researcher, I also see the purpose of my work being realized. And so mixed in with those tears of shame, I am able to add tears of joy.

I've heard that I have a natural knack for reaching students. Over the years I've been complimented again and again for creating a safe learning environment, and I've been told on many occasions that I am a committed and passionate advocate for my students. I make connections with my students. Fellow teachers frequently come to me after professional development sessions I've facilitated to say, "I want to teach more like you."

“I want to teach more like you.” Not so fast. I recognize a feeling radiating out from the pit of my stomach. I realize that I am once again being knocked a bit off-kilter. I think the way I approach my role in the classroom has been permanently affected. I am keenly aware that I have some things I need to work on, a sensitivity I need to further hone, conversations I need to have with others as I move forward, and as someone who has taught and continues to teach pre-service teachers, the trickle down from this revelation is potentially significant.

I could have been mindful to recognize that feeling of distaste that day I spoke with Angelica and push back against its source, focusing on what was visible despite the veil. Angelica and I weren't entirely cut off from one another, not by a long shot, for there were connections to be found and connections to be made, but I didn't take note of them. Indeed, as I look back at my presumed disconnect from her, I can see where my conception of an impenetrable wall --- a distancing --- between us actually served to reinforce a wall between us. I now realize that some of the emotions I felt when I was a student in Germany --- the emotions I sensed a possible reprieve from when talking to that woman in the loden green coat --- could have been revisited so as to get a sense of the deep, deep anguish and betrayal Angelica was feeling as an immigrant who had been discounted by Americans she had come in contact with. I could have searched within for touch points – similar feelings of fear, anger and helplessness; a similar progression of those emotions; similar shifts between having power and not having power - so that I might have been there for her as an authentic support and advocate. I could have become more carefully informed and might have chipped away at that power and privilege wall.

Being on the receiving end of discrimination can adversely impact both mental and physical health (Bhui, Stansfeld, McKenzie, Karlsen, Nagroo, & Welch, 2005; Rumbaut, 1994; Williams, Neighbors, & Jackson, 2003; Yip, Gee, & Takeuchi, 2008). For me, after my experience with the shoplifter and the elderly woman in the neighborhood grocery store, I would only shop at one large and chaotic grocery store downtown, which in my eyes meant that I --- the foreigner --- had a better chance at remaining obscure and undetected, and, hence, not reminded of my position. This meant having to take a bus and schlep heavy bags a long distance, but I didn't care. I deliberately ate less, too, so I wouldn't need to go to the grocery store as often, and I lost weight as a result. When I look at pictures of myself around the time when I returned to the U.S., my thinness is apparent. When I talked recently with my parents about my time in Germany, the conversation quickly shifted to the end of my experience abroad, when the excuse to help me pack up could be combined with their desire to take a vacation down the German Romantic Road. My mother distinctly remembers how thin I looked when she saw me and how she insisted on taking me shopping for clothes, so I would no longer need to wear my few pairs of *ratty* sweatpants, whose drawstrings I'd just been tying more tightly as my waist got smaller. As my dreamy surface image of what it meant to be a sojourner student was supplanted by the sometimes harsh reality of life as an outsider in Germany, I showed how a move abroad can be a traumatic experience fueled by a lost sense of identity and social control (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006).

And boy, did I quickly realize that I'd entered this adventure, my year abroad, with an inaccurate, dreamy, surface image of what it meant to be a sojourner student.

As humans, we are not only engaged with others across societies in tangible ways, we also experience life by employing imagination, thus envisioning ourselves connecting and interacting with others we do not know and likely will not ever know (Kanno & Norton, 2003). As Wenger (1998) states:

The concept of imagination refers to a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple and seeing a tree. (p. 176)

The term *imagined communities* references how human beings connect to others who are not real or readily accessible via an imagined context (Kanno & Norton, 2003). Originally coined by Anderson (1991), it is often applied to the context of nationalism. Noting that individuals typically have a deeply rooted, yet artificial, sense of connection with fellow citizens they have not ever crossed paths with, Anderson (1991) asserts that the notion of imagined communities works to explain why so many people the world over sacrifice their lives in combat for their nations.

The concept of imagined communities has application possibilities extending beyond nationalism, however. In terms of language learning, learners may weave themselves into imagined positions within imagined community contexts; these perceptions can have significant impact, sometimes disappointingly so, on the reality of their day-to-day lives. In Norton's study of four female adult ELLs (2001), one participant imagines herself as a member of Canada's professional community, and with that rooted presupposition, an ESL teacher's comment that she is not ready to take a computer class jars her so significantly that she suspends her enrollment in her English class in order to sustain her imagined community. Further, in Kanno's study (2000), Rui, a Japanese teenager who had spent most of his life away from his birth country, declared

upon his return that he no longer wanted to be Japanese because the Japan he experienced differed extensively from the preferred Japan he had painted in his head. As I strive for critical understanding of my story, I can see that I, too, entered my sojourner experience with very romantic expectations of what it meant to be a study abroad student and that these expectations conflicted with reality, causing me to limit my contact with Germans.

My imagined Germany had amounted to an Eichendorf poem, a castle on the hill, and strong black coffee with friends at an outside café. As I dug through my memory box, I stumbled upon the dirndl I'd purchased on a backpacking trip through Germany and Austria about eight months prior to my formal exchange experience. I remember how excited I was as I was fitted for it and how proud I was to wear it to church and family gatherings back home in the U.S. as my excitement built for my study abroad year. People would comment on its beautiful jacket with intricately crocheted flowers and would say how German I would look when I wore it. This dirndl marked my own ethnic German background. It marked my German major academic *star status* at my home university and my experience with German and Germany up to that point.

Learners create distinct imagined communities, which are socially intertwined threads of personal desire, personal background, the depth of investment in language learning, and the circumstances/environment with which the new language is being used (Norton, 2001). Reality unraveled my imagined German threads. I had presumed that my *star status* would remain in place in Germany, a common presumption among international students and their family members (Chen, 1999; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). I presumed that those I would be encountering in Germany would be waiting for me with open arms because I viewed myself as one of them. After all, I was a fellow college

student. I was of Germany ethnicity. I'd been to Germany several times before and had a good command of the oral language. I presumed that Germans would agree that I was one of them.

I was thus stunned and unprepared for the unkind comments and actions I experienced. That which had been axiomatic was called into question within a few months, and my new reality left me dismayed and extremely ambivalent. As I look at the picture I drew of me reaching for the Fortress, I now see that my imagined notions of who I was and how I was to fit in were stripped of me, leaving me coldly skeletal and hindering the development of intercultural competence.

Not only was I unaware of my privileged status in the United States, I unknowingly presumed that privilege would smoothly apply to my identity in Germany. However, a new and unanticipated pattern of dominance, which positioned me closer to the *less than* side, dealt a serious blow to my self-confidence, a common outcome for those who have experienced a loss of social control (Cummins, 2001; Luttrell, 1996; Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Kadianaki (2010) indicates that people moving about internationally, whether it's for tourism, for study, for temporary escape, or for permanent relocation, cope with their rapidly evolving identities and constraining social norms in a variety of ways. In Germany, many of my fellow American exchange students stopped going to classes and formed English-only friendships with each other, a reaction that mirrors the observations of Pitts (2009), who studied American sojourner students stressed by acculturation issues at a university in Paris, France. Sabine, the girl who had moved back and forth all her life between Germany and the U.S. joined that English-only group in my dormitory. My

coping strategy, however, was different, as I remained stubborn about minimizing my use of English no matter how stressful my life got. Instead, I avoided situations that would pull me even into the dimmest of spotlights and would require me to interact with Germans in a way that moved beyond the most superficial. I had a small group of Arab friends I would eat with and periodically watch television with, but otherwise, I spent a lot of time on my own, walking throughout the city, napping and sleeping late into the morning, and listening to classical music in my dorm room. This twist on the concept of ESL *habitus* (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Leki, 2007) works to explain why I initiated my downtown grocery shopping routine and why I rejected any friendly conversation initiated by a German.

Was this a good strategy at my end? Likely no. In fact, over the years I've wondered if all that time I spent alone, and all the weight I lost, and the extraordinary amount of sleeping I did indicated that I might have been moving toward depression.

My reflection on this difficult time in my life leaves me emotional and exhausted. I am overwhelmed by my data. Instead of putting my work down altogether, I shift strategic gears and turn to a comfort zone to get me back on track. At the office and at home, I am known for order, structure, and detailed planning. Often I accomplish this visually by creating charts, graphs, and timelines. I decide to create a simple t-chart on a piece of notebook paper, a two column succinct listing of my stories, one column for *then* and the other column for *now*. Not only am I calmed by being in my comfort zone, I am energized because freshly identified themes and trends begin to surface across these stories. I visually indicate these new connections with lines and arrows, sometimes within

the same column and sometimes across the columns. With that t-chart in hand, I feel less overwhelmed because visual next steps are apparent, and I move forward in my writing expressing these revelations.

I begin to regain my momentum. As my advisor says, I'm on a roll.

I know that the metaphorical slashes inflicted by that elderly German woman and others during my time abroad moved deep into my soul and have left me emotionally scarred. In my poem *WE and THEY*, I reference this scar, and I describe it in a way that makes clear it is not a simple surface scar akin to a playground scrape of the knee:

oh yes, my skin is forever hot branded

edges of my soul melt from the iron's heat

drip drip drip

As noted by Inzlicht, Tullett & Legault (2011), coping with prejudice can be challenging for a stigmatized individual long after leaving the negative environment, and it is not uncommon for lingering effects to spill over into other contexts and aspects of life. In my case, almost immediately upon my return to the United States, I was aware of a decreased interest in my German classes at my home university, and my desire to become a high school German teacher had completely evaporated. I looked for quickly attainable alternatives for my career, and I shifted gears into a graduate degree program in TESOL. The throbbing of my scar trickled into my academics and affected the career plans I'd had in place for years. For me, simply leaving Germany and closing the door on my study abroad experience couldn't erase memories or deaden the pain.

While I knew inside me that I had brought back emotional baggage from my time

abroad, I didn't share that knowledge with many people. I was aware that I had been afforded an opportunity experienced by relatively few, and I knew that I was perceived as a lucky girl to have been able to be a part of such an adventure. I didn't want to share my negative experiences or talk about what I was feeling because I worried I would be viewed as ungrateful, hyperbolizing, or as having contributed to the cause of my negative experiences. Because of this, when asked about my year abroad, I frequently employed the neutral response I shared in chapter one: *It was a real opportunity to learn a lot about life*. I think that my choice to avoid a potentially negative social reaction to any reference of inferior positioning kept *me* from confronting and critically reflecting on the experiences I'd had (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Because of that, I assert that my scar hasn't faded much with time.

Even now, decades later, that scar remains visible, and I can see how its throbbing discomfort continues to affect me when I cross paths with a German. I look to my recent experience with Klaus, my colleague's German exchange student, for evidence thereof:

My eyes focus on Klaus, and I click into hostess mode, introducing myself to him in German. Klaus comments in English that he hasn't heard German in several weeks and that it would almost be easier for him if we were to just use English. All eyes are on us. I smile and continue the conversation in German, speaking as quickly and as fluently as I can. Klaus notes --- again in English --- that I speak German very well. I continue to babble on in German, telling him about where I studied in Germany, and I ask him how he is enjoying his stay. He answers --- this time in German. I smile as we continue to talk in German because I have successfully won this linguistic arm wrestling match.

I always seem to get this way when I meet a German. Puffed up. Stiff. In control. Very much in control. Plastic.

I note the wording *linguistic arm wrestling match*, a reference to a kind of battle, which I fought with Klaus via a *stiff* and *plastic* demeanor. I was determined that day to be the alpha dog --- to aggressively exert control over my introductory conversation with

Klaus. Such aggressive behavior can be a response to perceived discrimination (Richards & Gross, 2000). For me, my persistence in conducting my conversation with Klaus in the language of *my* choosing was a conscious act of dominance and was fueled by both the throbbing I felt in my scar and my determination to never suffer another scar.

Again, I've heard that I have a natural knack for reaching students. I begin to shuffle through the files in my mind of past ELLs enrolled in courses I have taught to see if they have been adversely positioned in my classroom and to explore how I, as their teacher, have worked (or not worked) with them and their native English-speaking peers to critically reflect and work through identified negative experiences. This is a valuable undertaking for me, an educator, as self-reflection is key to the pursuit of instructional excellence (Barr & Clark, 2012).

The English Only movement has become a discussion point in the introductory sociolinguistics class I'm teaching. Nearly all the seats in the room are occupied and the conversation has become increasingly robust. Suddenly, one student, a diligent and kind student who speaks only English as indicated in an introductory survey she'd completed the first day of class, points casually to Lida and says to her in front of everyone else, "I mean, look at you. Seriously, no offense or anything, but getting a college degree in English in this country has to be really tough for people like you."

"I don't know what you are talking about. I was born in this country, you know! I'm as American as you are!" Lida sets her jaw and crosses her arms. And then tears quickly well up in her eyes. I then hear her say almost under her breath as she casts a

sideways glance at her peer, “Just because I look different and sound a little bit different....”

*The student who has made the comment triggering Lida’s tears looks confused and doesn’t say a word. She glances at me and then stares down at her notebook. I don’t think she realizes what she has said. I click into my **teacher fix-it mode** and quickly note for the benefit of the entire class the passion that commonly accompanies exploration of this topic, before abruptly and deliberately shifting instructional gears. I put students into small groups for an instructional activity, careful to keep those two students apart. Class marches on.*

Later, I make eye contact with Lida and motion her over to me. She has quickly composed herself and seems to have kept herself on task, but I want to be sure.

“You ok?” I ask.

She nods. “Yes, I’m fine. This isn’t new. It’s just...” She puts her hands up in front of her face and waves them away from her in a gesture of frustration before continuing her thought. “People look at me and they see a little Asian girl and they hear that I talk a bit different and they assume that I am a foreigner. I’m Hmong, it is true. There is nothing wrong with that, and I know I shouldn’t get so upset by people who just don’t know what it’s like. I don’t speak English all the time, but I’ve always spoken English. My husband is the same way. We are both from here. I grew up in Warwood [a town about ten miles from the campus], and we’ve heard this again and again. It’s just ridiculous. That’s all.” Again, Lida waves her hands in front of her face. I can definitely sense that she is itching to get out the door and away from this conversation.

I nod and say, “You’re doing great. I’m so glad you’re in this class. Chin up and

move on. If you need anything come and see me.” I give her a hug before she heads out the door. As I pack up my class materials, I think a bit more about Lida. She has a slight accent, she struggles in her writing, and she has told me that she simply doesn’t like classes with a heavy reading load because she is a slow reader. She’s a Gen 1.5er, I think.

I remember that Lida had popped into my office a few weeks back to tell me she was going to miss class that week. Her brother-in-law had come back to the U.S. after having served as a soldier in Iraq. Both she and her husband had been excited to travel to Texas to see him. “Boy,” I think to myself as I turn off the classroom light and head back to my office, “She may be more American than a lot of us in some ways...who the heck has the power to determine who is American anyway?” I furrow my brow.

Lida is reserved for the duration of the course and doesn’t contribute much to group conversations after this issue. I don’t think any of her peers notice or put two-and-two together. But I do, and so I periodically walk up and down the aisle she sat on the edge of and pat her on the shoulder as I teach.

I’m formally trained as an ESL teacher. In a field where it has historically been held that good instruction requires first and foremost good knowledge about the English language, particularly as it concerns syntax, phonology, and morphology (Bangou, Fellus, & Fleming, 2011), my mind went to Lida as a Generation 1.5 ELL who possessed a slight accent and had ongoing struggles with reading and writing. This response aligns with my reaction to another student I’ve mentioned, the student who sat in my office one

afternoon sharing intricate strategies about the sport of cricket; my response to that situation was to *stick to the business of the English language when working with students*.

However, as I interacted with Lida, I tried to display the qualities of an authentically caring teacher (O'Connor, 2006), who really wanted to help and motivate her student. I respectfully and privately checked in with Lida after class, I offered her words of encouragement and a hug, and I took notice of her throughout the duration of the course. However, my reaction didn't have to stop at caring. I had an opportunity to do more that day, but I didn't, for not only did I not take time to help Lida work through a challenging experience she had faced as a multilingual, I didn't take advantage of a teaching moment to work to generate in all of my students a deeper understanding of the challenge presented by the need to navigate multiple languages, cultures, and identities (MacPherson et al., 2010). Instead, I moved into conflict management mode, shifting gears entirely and dissipating any growing tension in the room. Many ESL teachers, which would include myself, have moved through their career preparation coursework addressing language acquisition, pedagogy, and linguistics while having minimum exposure to scholarship on multiculturalism, multilingualism, and/or identity, which, in turn, has left us largely unprepared to critically approach our jobs and the positioning of their language learning students in the classroom (Valdés, 1998).

Further, much research concerning second language instruction has been largely limited to a focus on classroom instructional strategies pertaining to written and/or oral skill development, yet a more effective approach may be grounded in a broader understanding of the complicated lives of ELLs and how they are socially positioned amongst fellow students, instructors, and the broader society (Gutierrez & Orellana,

2006; Haneda & Nespor, 2013; Harper & de Jong, 2004; McKay & Wong, 1996; Rossell, 2004; Yoon, 2008). As this story about Lida demonstrates, issues of privilege and power play out in classrooms, and tensions can emerge when privileged and minoritized groups are brought together. White students, including the student who spoke to Lida that day in class, may not recognize their position as members of a privileged group or may play down the role of racism in contemporary society (Accapadi, 2007; Barraclough & McMahon, 2013; Sleeter, 2001).

Students who are members of underprivileged groups sometimes describe themselves as stressed and confused about how/if they should defend themselves in conversations and activities involving racism and privilege (Barraclough & McMahon, 2013). Again, looking back on my own experience in Germany, I often found myself perplexed and anxious. As an unwelcomed American enrolled in a literature class on Goethe, I had no idea what to do when the professor coolly advised me to drop the class because *most Americans have poor German skills*, and while I recognized the injustice at play when my German/English dictionary was taken away from me for a *cheat check*, I sensed it would be fruitless, even a huge mistake in terms of my grade in the course, to speak out. When left in the dark on the dormitory stairwell by a German peer, I remained quiet because I was physically *and mentally* unsure of where I was and how to move on. When I had been sick and missed class and was shortly thereafter denied access to a peer's notes because I was a "stupid American", it wasn't that I didn't have a response or that I couldn't identify that response; it was that I didn't know how to defend myself at that exact moment or whether it would have been worth even trying. I was certainly confused and stressed. I believe my student Lida experienced a similar feeling of stress.

Upon hearing the *people like you* comment, Lida folded her arms, set her jaw, and identified herself as an American, but she then teared up and didn't pursue it any further with her peers. Stress was written all over her face.

However, while both Lida and I have shared common reactions to being at the losing end of complex discriminatory relations in the classroom, I realize that I cannot claim to have walked in Lida's shoes. The complex components of people's lives including race, gender, social class, and language shape the degrees to which privilege or a lack of power are experienced (Tisdell, 1993; Wildman, 2013). While there are touch points in our stories to be sure, our experiences remain distinct from one another if only because I had choices available to me by virtue of my White middleclass background, which were not necessarily available to her. I could have left Germany at any point – all it would have taken was a call to my parents and the quick purchase of a flight ticket. I could have stopped attending classes in Germany, knowing that I could have recouped lost credit hours at my home university with relative ease. If I kept quiet, being White was sometimes enough to let me blend unobtrusively into crowds, and even if it didn't, I knew that my unhappy experience in Germany would come to an end, frankly sooner instead of later. Lida, who could not hide her Asian appearance and lived in a working class town, may not have had the same options available to her.

Lopez (2001) describes marginalized human beings as perceived outsiders whose identities and voices are barred from full access to all layers of the prevailing society. In schools, marginalized students exist as outsiders too, living on the fringe of the classroom with limited access to quality education; the energy these students must exert to build sustainable connections between their learning environments and themselves often falls

short (Ghory & Sinclair, 1997). Edwards and Schmidt (2006) describe individuals such as Lida as the *truly marginalized*, for they have no choice but to deny pieces of themselves as they work to reach personal goals in their academic lives and beyond. As I move back through my stories, I've crossed professional paths with a lot of truly marginalized people: the cricket-loving ELL immigrant, the Croatian girl whose stay in the U.S. was extended because war had broken out at home, the refugee from Iraq who called me *honey*, and more.

Was I a *truly marginalized* student in Germany? No – I had options. But while I'm not likely to ever understand what it feels like to be *truly marginalized*, it doesn't mean I should ever stop trying to understand what it is like for those who are. And I don't want to stop trying.

“Hang tight – I’ll be right out. Let me just grab a pad of paper and a pen,” I shout out into the waiting area off of my office where three Latino high school seniors, the mother of one of the students, their high school guidance counselor and an advisor from the college’s Admissions department were waiting. The day had been long and hectic, and at 4:00PM, I was running on my last bits of energy. Taking a deep breath and putting a smile on my face, I push into the waiting area and shake hands with everyone. The college had been trying to build stronger ties with this particular high school, and tailor-made tours such as this for guidance counselors and small groups of students were happening on a more frequent basis. I was a part of this particular tour because all three boys were native speakers of Spanish and two of them were receiving

ESL support at the high school. Two were originally from Mexico and one was originally from El Salvador. The mother in the group did not speak English and relied on her son for translation throughout the tour. The admissions advisor conducted most of the 'tour talk' and for the most part, the guidance counselor and I brought up the rear of the group. I noted that the boys were polite and engaged. There were many questions. The boy who had brought his mother wanted to be an auto-mechanic. The admissions counselor quickly excused herself with the two of them to fill out paperwork and to get the future mechanic signed up for an orientation. Suddenly we were a small group of four standing in front of the ESL Center. The guidance counselor, a fairly new educator who did not appear to speak Spanish, asked the remaining two boys what they thought of the campus and each said it looked nice.

She asked if they could see themselves going to school here. Each nodded his head. She asked if they had decided what they wanted to study. One said he wanted to do something with computers. I talked about the various technology majors offered at the college. The other said he wanted to be a Spanish/English interpreter and work with the local Hispanic population. I told him the institution didn't have a program meant to prepare him for that particular career pursuit, but that the college did offer a degree in human services, which he might find interesting. I started to explain what human services was, but the counselor interrupted, saying to the boy, "I told you before, you're not ready for something like that. Why don't you do something like fix cars or work with computers instead? That's something you can do with your hands and be good at right now. I think you could probably handle a focus like that better."

I was confused. English hadn't been a problem while we had toured the campus, and I had noted that this young man had a gentle presence about him, the type of character I sensed would serve him well in a field like human services. He was embarrassed and crushed by her comments and stopped looking us in the eye. He pushed back a bit, saying that he really wanted to work with people and help them adjust to their new lives in this country. Using a very gentle voice, the guidance counselor shut down the conversation when she said, "You have to be realistic about what you can do."

The process of formal education serves to reinforce societal power and positioning (Tisdell, 1993; Walsh, 1991). I experienced this first hand when my German professor told me that my emerging German skills meant I had no place in his literature class. I also witnessed this decades later when this visiting guidance counselor interacted with the Latino student who aspired to become an interpreter. Deliberately or unintentionally positioning a student as *less than* may stunt intellectual growth and academic accomplishment, while positioning a student as intelligent and capable may open doors to strong classroom performance and a positive sense of self; indeed in academic environments where ELLs are establishing a presence for the first time, it is the initial positioning of those students, which is crucial to a long-term successful learning experience (Gee, 2012; Haneda & Nesper, 2013; Harre & Moghaddam, 2003; Howie, 1999; Yoon, 2008; Yoon 2012). Harklau's (2000) study of Generation 1.5 students' unsuccessful transition into college depicts feelings of hopelessness against an instructional backdrop of presumed language shortcoming and cultural disconnect. In the same vein, the Latino student, who toured my campus that particular afternoon, was

positioned as *less than* even before he had a chance to enter the classroom, which may be the reason why he never bothered to follow through and fill out an application to attend. However, Yoon's (2012) study of her immigrant sons moving through their schooling in America shows that a positive positioning of the self can combat – even trump – assigned identity within the classroom and that a strong sense of self can work positively to help negotiate future identity, particularly if there is a strong support mechanism in place.

An increasing number of studies indicate that English language learners are aware when they are positioned within the classroom environment as outsiders and that they have been put in those positions by the dominant group (Faez, 2012; Miller, 2000). Clearly this was the case not only for Lida, but also for the student who wanted to be an interpreter, for the look of embarrassment on his face was undeniable. Walsh (1991) indicates that ELLs are more apt to sense positioning as outsiders in mainstream learning environments than in ESL classes and as such tend to have a higher anxiety level in those mainstream surroundings. Yoon's (2008) study suggests that ELL perceptions of belonging were impacted by how the teachers positioned themselves in the classroom: Some optimally positioned themselves as teachers to all students, others positioned themselves as teachers of mainstream students, and yet others strictly positioned themselves as content-area teachers. In my story about the campus tour, the counselor's mechanical 1-2-3 question approach to interacting with those two boys (Do you like it here? Would you want to go here? What do you want to study?) suggests that she defined her professional self according to tasks outlined in her job description as guidance counselors are generally expected to play a significant role in helping high school

students shift into postsecondary educational pursuits (Linnehan, Weer, & Stonely, 2011).

I am sitting in my second department meeting as the campus's sole ESL specialist. I am considered a member of the English department and am surrounded by roughly fifteen adjunct and full-time composition, literature, and speech instructors. Eventually the conversation moves past descriptions of new policy and procedure, beyond discussions of curriculum and textbook updates, and lands squarely on the topic of unsuccessful students who fade away over the course of a given quarter or just don't seem to be able to submit quality work. Rapidly, conversation focuses on English language learners.

Bob, a full-time faculty member, turns to me and says, "I'm so glad you're here because I don't know what to do with them. Half the time, I look at their papers, and there are so many mistakes, I don't know where to begin. With you here, I can simply return their work and tell them to go see you and then resubmit. I'm so grateful to be able to wash my hands of the whole thing."

*"It is so frustrating. They just can't produce a grammatically correct sentence, and I feel bad having to take off points every time they miss a **the** or **a** or an **-s** ending on a verb. It makes me crazy," says Tina, another teacher. She waves a finger in the air.*

"Wait a minute. Are you aware that there are many languages in the world --- probably native languages of some of these students --- where articles don't even exist? I don't think it's fair that you take points off like that. These students will probably never get articles or endings like that right, so you're not giving them a chance," says Tom, a

speech teacher.

I nod my head in agreement and ask Tina, “How many points do you take off?”

“I take off a point for every missed article or grammar mistake.” I’m quite certain my face shows my shock. Another teacher, Jan, chimes in indicating that she does the same and indeed has no choice in the matter “because it’s wrong. It’s a mistake. The grammar is bad no matter what we do. It makes me crazy too.”

*“I’ll tell you what makes **me** crazy,” offers Theresa, a long-term instructor with a reputation for being a tough grader. “Has anybody in here had Sam in class yet? Sam has been here in this country most of his life and will tell you constantly how he has worked at the same store for many years and will go on and on about how he doesn’t like his Pakistani family and how he does everything in his head in English, and then he’ll turn in a paper (and I have him in my creative writing class) that is absolute garbage and he gets really, really angry when I score him down for it, and he says it’s because English isn’t his first language.” Theresa pauses to take a breath and role her eyes. “I tell him that nobody will respect him if he doesn’t take the time to write using correct grammar. I think he’s using his Pakistani background as a crutch when it’s to his advantage. **That’s** what makes me **crazy**.” Her emphasis on those two words in this last statement indicates that she is dead serious.*

I make eye contact with Tom who shakes his head and suggests that these teachers try to take a few minutes to consider what it would be like for them to earn a college degree in Sam’s native language. I chime in and indicate that I would love to meet and work with Sam. With awkward diplomacy, I then suggest that taking a point off every time a student misses an article seems extreme and that perhaps focusing only on

those grammatical items that truly interfere with readability and understandability as opposed to every little thing outside of Standard English might be a better pedagogical approach.

“BUT IT’S WRONG,” exclaim Tina and Jan in an odd moment of jinx. I could feel my face get hot. So much for diplomacy.

*The dean, who has been leading the meeting, tries to ease the rising tension by noting that this is a difficult problem to solve and that both sides of the debate want our students to be successful. As the dean moves on to the next agenda item, I think to myself that any teacher who takes a point off every time a **the** is missed in a piece of writing may not have the best of intentions in mind for his/her students and isn’t willing to really give those students an opportunity to share their thoughts in writing.*

I wonder if this is going to be a good place to put down career roots in the long run.

Language is a social practice human beings employ to negotiate meaning with others. LoBianco (1996) emphasizes that the native language of an ELL is the original vehicle for this social practice and stresses the need for educators to value and intellectualize it. At my English department meeting, Tom and I both tried to persuade others that language is not a framework for communication, which needs to be strictly bounded by prescriptive grammar rules, but Tina, Jan, and Theresa resisted our assertion and dismissed the writing submitted by students such as Sam as *absolute garbage*. Further, Theresa, by stating that *nobody will respect him if he doesn’t take the time to write using correct grammar*, seems to believe that Sam isn’t worthy of respect because

his grammar is a product of laziness or poor time management. The fact that Theresa, Tina, and Jan all used the word *crazy* to describe how they feel when reading the submitted work of ELLs reinforces the research of Gersten (1999), who notes in his study that elementary school teachers, who define their instructional role regarding ELLs in their classroom in terms of vocabulary expansion and grammatical accuracy, become increasingly frustrated by shortcomings in the literacy development of those students. Yoon (2008) suggests that too often teachers position their English Language Learner students as deficits or frustrations.

Haneda and Nespor (2013) note that for educators with limited experience with ELLs, traditional teacher philosophies about instruction and classroom routines may clash with the unique needs and backgrounds of these students, which in turn may generate a perceived aura of *strangeness* in the classroom on the part of those educators. Bob, another attendee at this department meeting, was mystified by the writing submissions that came from ELLs in his classes and was aware that his instructional approach wasn't helpful to those students. His solution to this was to push away the *strangeness* by positioning himself as a teacher to mainstream students only. This adversely affected the learning experiences of ELLs in his courses (Yoon, 2008), for they were required to move through extra steps in their learning process such as making regular tutoring appointments with me and then doubly submitting assignments in order to earn a grade.

I met with the student Sam on several occasions after this department meeting, and almost every time, he would look at me and shake his head, wondering why he should give it his best effort because he didn't believe his teacher read all that he wrote.

When I observed a definite pattern of red pen markings limited to the first few paragraphs of Sam's work and noticed that the one point policy had remained in place, I resorted to proofreading his work and the work of other ELLs who were enrolled in classes taught by Theresa, Tina, and Jan. While I didn't share it aloud, Sam was on my mind when my *And Anyway* colleague, the very talkative Writing Center tutor I had described in chapter one, asked me what it was like working with the non-native English speakers on our campus:

If you only knew. I am ashamed but once in a while, I proofread chunks of their writing because it really does take years to get where they need to be— and that assignment is due tomorrow. Others need them to succeed right now. A lot of them struggle hard, and wind up humiliated and angry and feeling like losers.

Nakata's (2000) research focuses on the indigenous schoolchildren of the Torres Strait who, despite highly developed abilities to codeswitch between their native Creole and the English of their schooling, remain unable to fully express themselves at school because of persistent limitations with English. I became a proofreader to give Sam and other students like Sam a fighting chance, and I know I'm not alone in resorting to this type of shortcut. Fu (1995) describes her own experience as a Chinese native studying literature at an American university and how she resorted to *Cliff's Notes* as a way to nudge out academic success when her Chinese background in literary analysis was not well-received by her American professors and classmates. At the department meeting I attended, it was Tom who understood that a vibrant, healthy classroom is not grounded in mere tolerance but instead is anchored in a respectful engagement of human beings across their differences. Tom also understood that teachers such as Tina, Jan, and Theresa cannot rightfully assume parallel conceptions of the world and standard linguistic understanding across all students (Walsh, 1991).

Kubota (2004) suggests that educators should seek “social justice and equality among all people rather than merely celebrating differences or assuming a priori that all people are equal” (p. 37). As such, educators must think in innovative ways so as to authentically meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students. After this department meeting, I quickly implemented a marketing blitz regarding ESL support on our campus. Instructor mailboxes were filled with pamphlets; I met several times with Admissions advisors and requested that they make ESL support a standard talking point when speaking with prospective students; and I convinced my supervisor to relocate my office into the library, a place that experienced a lot of student and faculty traffic so that I might become a more visible presence on campus. I was convinced that I needed to find and work in tandem with instructors who didn’t view their enrolled ELLs as deficits.

“Hi! Is this a good time? Do you have a few minutes?” asked Kim, a developmental education writing teacher on my campus. “I wanted to drop off a copy of the second writing assignment that Eddie got in class the other day. I know he’s coming in to see you at some point this week, and I wanted you to know what he’s working on,” she says as she does a quick calendar check in her head. “The rough draft is due in a week and a half, and I had all the students write down in their notebooks all of my expectations for this assignment.”

“Great,” I say and I take the assignment out of her hand. Eddie is one of my newer students, and I’ve been tutoring him for a couple of weeks. He is from the Philippines, and his wife, a nurse, recently got a job at a local hospital prompting the entire family had moved to the U.S. Eddie himself had decided that he wanted to pursue a

career in nursing and had enrolled at the college.

“How’s he doing? How are you doing?” I ask Kim.

“Really good, actually. You know...I think just knowing that he can come here and get some extra help with his English and his writing has helped him feel better about the class and being on campus in general. Plus, I think now that the first couple of weeks are behind us, he realizes that he’s not really behind the others in class...in fact, he’s probably ahead of some of his classmates in some ways since he’s married and has kids...he can contribute in some ways that others in the class can’t.”

“Well, that’s good,” I answer. “I know he’s always on time here and has emailed me his writing in advance of our appointments every single time. I think he has a really good chance of getting into the nursing program.”

“Oh yeah,” Kim nods, “He’s on the ball. That’s for sure. I’m still not sure how much he’s getting, but I can tell he’s trying hard. I’m trying to speak more slowly and to not be writing and facing the board when I talk. I tried what you suggested about writing out an agenda for class and crossing each item off when we are done with it.”

“Sounds good to me,” I say, “Let’s keep in touch and see how it goes. Eddie is good at communicating with both of us and he knows that we are working together.”

Kim leaves my office in the library to go to grade student work, promising that she’ll get back with me once she’s read Eddie’s paper. I think to myself how this is a really good collaborative venture and as much as it makes me happy, Eddie is the real winner.

The role of an ESL specialist can be invaluable in helping others understand and

support the unique needs of ELLs. A collaborative approach to teaching by mainstream instructors and ESL specialists can provide needed support of ELLs in the content-area classroom (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). For example, Haneda and Nespor (2013) describe in their research how ESL instructors purposefully collaborated over time with K-12 mainstream teachers so as to deepen an overarching understanding of ELL backgrounds and unique needs. As my story indicates, Kim and I worked closely together, for as is common at many postsecondary institutions in the U.S., incoming ELLs were often placed in her developmental reading and writing classes, classes that had not been designed for non-native speakers of English (Harklau, Siegal, & Losey, 1999). Kim had no formal training with ESL students, and yet she was eager to do what she could to help them succeed, so when she had received an informational pamphlet about ESL support in her mailbox, she looked me up. We would meet for an occasional cup of coffee, and we would check in with each other on a regular basis. I learned about her teaching style and I passed on tips to her about teaching ELLs. I suggested, for example, how maintaining a slow but steady pace to speech and being careful to look at your students when you speak can help an ELL with comprehension (Echevarria & Graves, 2007). Ongoing communication between Kim and myself, where observations, knowledge, and information were consistently shared, provided the basis for an effective support system for Eddie.

I realize more than ever how important and how impactful my job is, and I realize that in many ways I'm quite effective at it. I know, too, that this journey --- this time I have set aside for deep and honest reflection on my study abroad experience and on my

career --- has been invaluable and will make me an even better professional. In chapter three I discussed how I would draw this work to an end:

...even though I understand that my work, my painting, will forever remain an unfinished work, I will draw it to a close when I sense a natural pause, perhaps a moment when I simply need to let my story's paint dry. I may garner the advice of my dissertation committee in this, for I acknowledge that outsiders may sense this natural pause before I do.

I've sensed the pause, and I haven't needed to reach out to my committee. It's time to move on to my last chapter, for there are things that I need to say for my sake, and I hope that they will stir in my reader some lingering thoughts as well.

Obviously the personal and professional stakes in this dissertation are much higher than those in any game of Musical Chairs.

But I've noted that just like Musical Chairs, this dissertation has included its share of anxiety and anticipation. And just like at Valerie Schneider's birthday party all those years ago when I lost in that game of Musical Chairs, my research has left me at times embarrassed and in tears, and there were plenty of times when I didn't want to have anything to do with it anymore.

But I have to say, unlike any game of Musical Chairs, I've not spent my time on this project walking around and around in circles, for I am able to look back over my shoulder and see how far I've traveled since "A Walk in the Park."

I feel satisfied.

CHAPTER 5: WRITE NOW, REVISED

Write Now, Revised

Just write, let it all hang out

Get it down as it pops into your head

Put the books away and write

It's all right to let it flow

Just write

Just write, all right?

Right on!

And so I write

To you

Confident it's all right

That it's not all right

And yet I think I am right to now put it right

And I know what I want to write

And I will

This feels ~~right~~ better.

I call a *time out* so that I might take stock of my ongoing journey, formally noting the extent to which I have accomplished my goals for this particular project and to consider what the next steps might be. I note with a chuckle that some things don't change, for just as I described when I wrote the poem "A Walk in the Park," I am sitting once again at my desk in my office on a gray Sunday, surrounded by notes and books, my dog at my feet, and I'm looking out the window at the elementary school across the street. Indeed on the surface it may appear that life has simply marched on for me, but I know this is not the case.

I peek my head around the doorframe and knock. This is a busy woman, for as I have waited for my appointment, I have seen her repeatedly moving in and out of her office, speaking with others and passing along paperwork. I have been told that this professor, who is new to the institution where I am moving through my PhD experience, is great to work with and highly accomplished. I've even heard through the grapevine that her accomplishments had gained her an invitation to the White House where she'd met the President. I was really excited about this appointment with her. Her back is to me, but she quickly spins her chair around to see who is knocking.

"Dr. V., I'm Elizabeth, your next appointment. I'm happy to wait out in the main area if you're not quite ready for me."

"No, no, no," she waves me in with a big smile, "Come in, come in. Have a seat."

I sit down and notice an opened and half-filled container with what might be her

lunch. I'm a desk-luncher myself, so I understand the hectic day she's having. I get right down to business, so I can get out of her hair.

"So, my advisor thought it might be a good idea for the two of us to meet. I'm moving closer to my dissertation phase, and I'm trying to narrow down my research interest. I think she's hoping that maybe we could talk a bit about that broad area of interest and that you might be able to make a few suggestions or share some ideas."

"Sure. Tell me about yourself. How far are you in your studies? When do you take your qualifying exams? What projects have you been involved with before? What is your research interest and why is it interesting to you?" asks Dr. V. as she leans forward in her chair toward me.

Dr. V. seems genuinely interested in me and her smile quickly puts me at ease. I fill her in on everything she has asked about, and when I get to my area of research interest, I talk about Generation 1.5 ELLs and how they appear to be a growing entity on the campus where I work and how I'm not sure what I should do to help them because nothing I try seems to work. Dr. V. listens to me, nodding, and then when I am finished, she chuckles softly. Before saying anything, she puts a forkful of desk-lunch in her mouth.

"The thing is," she says as she chews her food, "you've got a problem if you're going to do this, and you should know that it could be a big problem."

She finishes chewing her food and swallows before continuing. I wonder to myself where she is going with this and if she might suggest I pursue something else.

“You see,” she says, “When you’re talking about Generation 1.5 ELLs, you’re talking about Hispanics, right? You’re talking about my people because they’re the ones that make up the largest chunk of this group. Let’s face it, right?”

“Right...” I say, not sure where this is going.

*“Ok. Let me just say something. You’re not one of us, and you will never be one of us. I mean, look at you,” she says as she points to my head, “You’ve got **red hair**. I don’t think you will be taken seriously because you’re not one of us. Now, I’m not saying this to be mean, but you need to know that you’re going to have a problem if you pursue this. I think you need to be very careful and think your idea through a bit more. I’m not saying it’s impossible, but it’s going to be very, very challenging for you. Think some more and read a lot of the research that is already out there.”*

I have no idea what to say or do. I have absolutely no response to her comments. She isn’t being mean. Her tone and eyes seem to reflect concern for what I think she sees as student naiveté. She’s clearly the expert, and I’m not even through my qualifying exams. So I let her take the lead, and I sit quietly while she eats another forkful of desk-lunch, and I wait to see what other advice or questions she has.

She kindly suggests that I pursue some book reviews and begin to get serious about getting something published. She gives me the name of someone associated with a journal with whom I might be able to network. I thank her for her time and leave, so she can move on to the next part of her day. She stays in contact with me periodically via email up until she accepts a position at a different institution.

I have valued the intimacy and authenticity of the autoethnographic experience. Its inherent provision for time and space means I have been able to go back into my life to excavate and explore memories from my time as a university student in Germany. Autoethnography's emphasis on process as opposed to product has meant that I have been able to focus on the search for personal and malleable truth. This is a particular truth specific to my understanding and my interactions with others, and it is a truth that may be revised as I continue in this journey of exploration and discovery.

Through my excavation, I quickly grew to realize that painful experiences from my study abroad experience had not healed through the passage of time. Instead they had been largely dormant deep inside me for decades, resurfacing periodically to poke and adversely affect my actions and interpretations of my *here and now*. Once revived and explored reflectively, those experiences (my primary source of data) generated a new personal clarity including a layer of *knowing by feeling*. External scholarly data worked to support my findings and to provide direction as I dug into the cultural context of my experiences in my search for deeper critical understanding (Chang, 2008).

As I look at the wide spectrum of autoethnographic options with evocative positioned at one end and analytic at the other, I try to pinpoint exactly where I would place myself in terms of my dissertation. As I had anticipated, my work is largely balanced with components of both. However, as I worked on my storytelling, drawing, and poetic craft and became more comfortable with them over time, I sensed myself inching closer to the evocative. By the time I reached chapter four, my eternally patient advisor's feedback to me again and again was to weave scholarship into my personal data, but I resisted some as I heard voices in my head tempting me to let my story and

poetically and visually framed emotions speak for themselves. Clearly I found my experiences and the expression of those experiences to be a powerful source of data, and I learned that everybody--- including me --- has a rich story to tell.

Autoethnography has provided a framework for me to explore my personal creativity as well as the very nature of that creativity. I have learned that creativity is powerful not because of the sketch or poem it produces, but because its source comes deep from within my soul --- a place my brain cannot directly reach. Kress (2000) recognizes the limits of traditional, linear language and indicates the meaning-making potential of using different modes of representation to express thoughts and emotions.

When the contents of my soul were released through my poetry and sketches, a distinct collective awareness was generated, and when that awareness was combined with my traditional mental analysis, new understandings and meanings provided a fresh outlook on my world. This recontextualizing of my reality produced new schemata, new ways to understand my experiences, something the creative arts do with regularity (Eisner, 2002).

My creative endeavors provided evidence to me that sometimes you have to look backwards in order to go forward. The quick pace with which I produced my poems and sketches, the tears that welled up in my eyes *every time* I wrote a poem or drew a picture, the vividness and detail of the art itself (as if I had just experienced it yesterday) told me that there was something from my history needing excavation and exploration. And every time when I stood back and looked at what I had created, I was pleased. I felt as if I had just cleaned out a closet in my soul, finding something I'd been looking for and creating room to store something new. For me, the creative layer to my autoethnographic pursuit has worked most to realize the endeavor's therapeutic potential (Ellis, 2004). Indeed, this

creative layer has been a symbolic oxygen tank on this expedition, and without it, I would not have been able to dive deeply into the ocean of my stories and could not have resurfaced with my handful of pearls. My poetry and sketching have indeed been valuable tools in my autoethnographic toolbox, *providing sensory jolts*, a new way to represent feelings on paper so that I might stand back and take stock (Muncey, 2010). I will continue to engage in creative expression as an outlet to understanding as I move forward in my career and life.

"I've got too much on the go. I'm always stressed out. It's not fair to you. I'm just going to quit this whole thing. I'm walking away. Don't even try to talk me out of it," I say to my husband, who for the millionth time this weekend has just reminded me that I needed to do a bit of work on my dissertation this weekend.

"Oh no you're not. You've come too far and you've invested too much. Just maybe walk the dog and then sit down and see what happens. You'll get back into it. You're so close," says my husband, who's trying the old-fashioned pep talk approach.

"No, and you can't make me," I snap as it dawns on me that traveling back into time is possible because I sound like a three-year-old.

"Fine. You're going to do what you want to do, so I'm not going to bother you about it anymore. I don't know why you're being like this," my husband says with a hint of uncharacteristic exasperation.

*I walk the dog, take a long shower, do some laundry, and watch **a lot** of television --- all while I try to talk myself into settling back into a dissertation routine. It takes until*

the following weekend before I actually head back into my office and open the dissertation file stored in my laptop.

At times I resisted working on my dissertation. I've always been a *get 'er done* and *get 'er done well* type, but this experience was very different. There were several times when I'd uncharacteristically put my work down for weeks before picking it up again. While some of my on-again, off-again rhythm was a testimony to my life's relentless pace, I know that's far from the whole story. Through this autoethnographic process, I've learned about the power of my own ego, which fought putting down on paper anything that indicated I was a flawed human being, noted a record of mistakes, and provided opportunities for personal growth. My ego fought against my typical drive to accomplish with an intensity that caught me by surprise.

While I had read that conflicting and complex feelings work to make the autoethnographer vulnerable to personal insight (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), the need to mediate this particular conflict was new to me, for historically my ego and my drive to accomplish had worked in tandem. However, in this instance my work ethic pushed me hard to complete the research (and with it the degree) I had started, while at the same time, my ego resisted heavily against the need to plod through the swampy patches of an autoethnographic experience, which included the public airing of some of my less-than-stellar moments and the need to confront what my readers might think of me because of those moments. And so there were several times when my ego and its associated emotions told me to take a hiatus, and I did. I know this need to step away to take deep breaths and rejuvenate has been experienced by many autoethnographers (Ellis, 2004;

Jones, 2013; Ronai, 1995). In fact, on at least two occasions, I announced to my husband I was quitting the whole thing. Yet, after a few weeks or sometimes even a month, I'd inevitably circle back around and start reading some articles or journaling out some memories. This was usually followed by a timely email of encouragement from my advisor, which would really shake my work ethic and ego back into sync. So for me, autoethnography has pulled together emotions and qualities of self in different and new combinations, and in the process has provided me with opportunities to hone my emotional awareness and management skills.

New combinations of emotions and qualities of self are expressed in unique combinations within my sketches, and I sense there is so much I can learn from them. I take time to cut them out from a printed copy of my dissertation. I lay them down side-by-side on my kitchen table and my eyes quietly move back and forth between them. I find this visual analysis to be enlightening and emotionally satisfying. I note changes in the messages I pull from earlier sketches, an indication that I am not the same person I was when I originally drew them. My eyes stop at the scuffed sneakers, and I recall how my early focus was on their tattered state, a representation, I felt, of my emotional experience in the park. Now I look at this picture and I feel those sneakers represent myself at the end of this autoethnographic experience. I'm worn but comfortable, just like an old pair of shoes I've kicked off and onto the floor after a good, long walk. It's so interesting to me how the progression of time changes the way I look at things.

My research question indicated a quest for connection, a desire to see how my study abroad experience might intersect with and thus inform my instruction as an ESL professional, and I indicated the importance of this by pointing to our increasingly globalized world and globalized college campuses. Instead of connection, however, much of what I wrote about boiled down to *separation* or *efforts to separate*. This theme of separation was visible in many ways, sometimes bluntly and sometimes subtly. I wrote about physical walls of separation such as the Berlin Wall. I drew walls too, taking time to draw the many layers of walls surrounding the Fortress in Wuerzburg, and I described the care I took to respect a symbolic wall that existed between the shoelaces of my scuffed shoes. I also noted how ESL teachers tend to stand apart from ESL researchers and how ELLs are often siloed apart from one another by virtue of scientific classifications. I even separated words with extra spacing in one of my poems. And I wrote, too, of things that hindered views and potentially paved the way for separation such as the veil and the migraine orange speckles that danced in front of my eyes when I got lost in the park. This exploration of separation demonstrates how autoethnography takes the writer in unexpected directions (Ellis, 2004).

I have learned the importance of recognizing such instances of separation, for I have observed that where there is separation between people, there is often evidence of power and positioning. I have a deeper understanding of how being on the losing side of a struggle for power can have far-reaching and long-term detrimental effects, and I have spent much time exploring and expressing how that feels. As I look at my sketches, particularly the scuffs on my shoes and the blood-red fingertips on my skeletal hands, I *see* that I have experienced the real and scarring pain caused by my sensing placement on

the *less than* side of the positioning wall. As I reread my poem “WE and THEY,” I can *hear* and *smell* the fleshy edges of my youthful soul being singed by the branding iron of lesser status. When I relive my “Walk in the Park,” I *feel* the relentless push and inescapable weight carried by a person who feels victimized. And when I replay Valerie Schneider’s birthday party in my mind, I can *taste* my salty tears of frustration and embarrassment when the nonnegotiable rules of “Musical Chairs” meant that I had to stand apart and no longer play along with everyone else.

I have explored the extent to which being positioned on what felt like the losing side of a power wall can affect all of my senses and in the process, shake my sense of self to the core. My work aligns with research indicating that international college students are more apt to feel less satisfaction and increased discomfort inside the classroom and out when compared to host culture peers (Fu, 1995; Liberman, 1994; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005;). Aligning with my work is also scholarship asserting that those same students may be challenged by unanticipated instances of domination and devaluation resulting in depleted self-confidence (Cummins, 2001; Harklau, 2000; Lee & Rice, 2007; Luttrell, 1996; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). However, my work adds to that existing scholarship a first-voice description of those feelings of discomfort and intimately details how I reacted to the emotional realization that I was perceived by many surrounding me in Germany as a problem (Du Bois, 1897).

I grew up in Buffalo, New York around two major canals, and my family and I used to spend occasional summer afternoons picnicking along one of those canals, the Welland Canal. I would nibble away at sandwiches and potato chips while watching

massive ships pass through on their way to or from the St. Lawrence Seaway. They would slowly move up and down with the changing level of water before purposefully moving forward through an opened gate into an adjoining lock.

I see my understanding of my story in Germany unfolding like a journey through such a canal. Through this project, I have made progress, moving with certainty through a lock of knowledge, but I know I haven't reached the major waters of understanding yet. The complexities of my interactions with Germans and related issues of power and privilege are real and intricate and will require future movement through many more reflective locks. Just like the sailors who used to shout out greetings and news to me from their ships in the Welland Canal, I will continue to explore these complexities and shout out moments of sudden realization as they become apparent to me.

Steady as she goes. The water rises and falls, yet I move forward. I am still becoming myself (Song, 2009).

Through my work on my dissertation, I have learned how I have unknowingly stood on a privileged side of the power wall, and I have carved out a new vein of understanding about how I have played an active role in perpetuating power imbalances. After reading Du Bois's (1897) notion of *the veil*, I created the sketch *Enshrouded in a Veil* to visually create a deeper understanding of my White Middle-Class English-Speaking Americanism. I have taken time to study this sketch, trying to derive meaning from my subconscious choice to represent this veil in a fashion that resembles the roll of aluminum foil sitting in a drawer in my kitchen.

Aluminum foil is a staple in my kitchen. It's something I frequently reach for, both as I cook and as I clean up after dinner. Foil is enduring and doesn't melt even under the strongest heat of the oven. Foil seals tightly, too, keeping the diverse smells of leftovers stored in the fridge from coming into contact with one another. I use foil to keep my oven clean, spreading a layer of it on the bottom rack because it's a quick and easy way to combat the mess caused by the bubbling over of cooking ingredients. Admittedly, though, foil can be a bit of a pain because it needs to be unsealed and folded back in order to see what's on the other side of it, which means that I have to take time to actually pull my leftovers out of the fridge to determine if they are still good to eat or if they need to be tossed away.

My sketched visual of a foil veil hiding my face works quite well, for it floats in the air somewhere above my head and rolls like a long, stiff sheet out of a pre-fab rectangular cardboard box, a product of mass-production by society's assembly line. Because it doesn't touch me, I have been unaware that it is in place, and while faint lines across the sketched sheet of foil indicate slight movement as I walk through my day, it is stiffly persistent and always there (Wildman, 2013). Because of that, it has become understandable to me how, despite my genuinely caring nature, I have perpetuated the hierarchical status quo.

I have learned how difficult and emotional it is to recognize and give up my innocence regarding privilege, but I have become a reflective agent of personal growth involved in an ever-evolving process of personal mindfulness (Barracough & McMahon, 2013; Wildman, 2013; McEvoy, 2013; Pratto & Stewart, 2012). My work shows intimate evidence of this noticing process and its corresponding emotions. In early drafts of

chapter four, I described the veil I have worn as a finely woven cloth, something that could be felt as it draped across my face. At that point, I felt that there were no excuses for my ignorance, and was very ashamed and overcome with guilt. However, my subsequent sketch, which depicted the veil suspended above my head and pulled out from a box, helped me to view myself as a human being who has been largely a tacit participant in a broad, socially constructed system, and while I still feel frustrated with myself, that frustration is now mixed with hope and a determination to do better.

I know that a constant mindfulness of this veil will let me fold back its foil edges, peer around it, and it makes me a better teacher. I have a deeper sense of the issues of privilege at play when I walk into the classroom. As my stories have not involved external intervention about these issues, I believe that they will be largely challenged to the extent that I (or my students) challenge them. I find myself at a fork in the road where I can choose to retreat back into what I was before this journey or I can commit myself to a teacher's life of ever-deepening critical mindfulness (Barracough & McMahon, 2013). I choose the second option, the tougher of the two, which paves the way for authentic advocacy of ELLs, something Valdés (1998) has asserted is largely missing in my career field.

And so the gate opens and I move forward into the next lock of this canal, and I am alert to see how this next step in my great voyage will play itself out. I appreciate how shifting into a new lock changes my view a bit, and how over time and with passage through several locks, I will find myself in a new place altogether. I will continue to explore the interpersonal complexities from my sojourner experience at a university in

Wuerzburg, Germany. I will also begin to explore what it means to be a critical advocate in the field of ESL education. As I do so, my newly found mindfulness will act like concrete bollards on either side of the lock assuring that I stay the course and that I don't glide back toward the place I came from.

Reflection as a purposeful practice is critical to improving teaching as experience alone does not lead to expertise (Farrell, 2013). Actively reflecting and learning from my less-than-stellar moments is energizing and can prepare me to incorporate what I deem as socially important into my teaching self (Beijard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Conderman & Morin, 2004; Webster & Schempp, 2008). And so I close my eyes and I recreate one of my stories in my head so as to put my new mindfulness to the test. My thoughts shift quickly to Lida, the Hmong student in my sociolinguistics class who was wrongfully put in the position to defend herself.

Suddenly, one student, a diligent and kind student who speaks only English as indicated in an introductory survey she'd completed the first day of class, points casually to Lida and says to her in front of everyone else, "I mean, look at you. Seriously, no offense or anything, but getting a college degree in English in this country has to be really tough for people like you."

"I don't know what you are talking about. I was born in this country, you know! I'm as American as you are!" Lida sets her jaw and crosses her arms. And then tears quickly well up in her eyes. I then hear her say almost under her breath as she casts a sideways glance at her peer, "Just because I look different and sound a little bit

different....”

The student who has made the comment triggering Lida’s tears looks confused and doesn’t say a word. She glances at me and then stares down at her notebook. I don’t think she realizes what she has said.

I quickly jump into the conversation and say, “Actually this is a really good opportunity for us all to pause and reflect. Let’s get out our journaling notebooks. Take ten minutes and freewrite about bilingualism. We defined it at the top of the hour in very textbook fashion. Let’s take some time now and explore bilingualism through your personal lens of understanding and/or experience. You may want to write about a time you crossed paths and interacted with a bilingual, you may want to write about what it is like to be bilingual, you may want to explore what you suspect might be unique opportunities and challenges presented by being bilingual, or you may want to go in a different direction altogether. If it’s honest reflection, take it in any direction you want. Be sure to save a few minutes at the end, though, to explore which language or form of language you think is preferred in our culture and why, and note, too, if you regularly use that form of language.”

*I pause to quickly move to the board to write **language hierarchy** and **cultural hierarchy**. Turning around back to my students, who are already pulling out well-used notebooks, I add, “While we will be discussing all of this --- including these two concepts --- after ten minutes have passed, your writing is for your eyes only unless you want to share. Know, too, that I will be sharing some of my own experiences and evolving personal understanding relating to all of this as well.”*

I feel good about this recreated story.

This written role-play of revised teaching practice has utility for me as a teacher and advocate who is focused on best practices in the classroom for the benefit of all individual students (Grymes, 2007). As I close my eyes and play this scene in my mind, I see how I will strive to recognize walls of privilege in my classroom and how I will quickly and purposefully react to chip away at those walls. I sense how I will have the guts to recast instructional plans when a wall is identified and will capitalize on those difficult but important teaching moments when they arise.

I envision how I will preemptively set the tone for change in my classes, prioritizing a safe learning environment where students may not always be comfortable but will feel valued while being challenged to confront social issues relating to their own behaviors and beliefs (Holley & Steiner, 2005). I see how my students will connect their own experiences and beliefs to historical and social context both through ongoing personal writing and peer discussion, and how in that process perhaps that which is tacit as it pertains to power and privilege will begin, even just a little bit, to become explicit (Rocco & West, 1998). In my mind, I can envision the seeds of such connections being planted in the woman who insulted Lida.

And like Ellis (2004), I don't hesitate to share parts of my journey with my students, for as Messner (2011) indicates, it is particularly important for educators from privileged social groups to tell their own stories to students when working to illuminate issues of societal privilege.

I see how I might take my first few steps down this freshly chosen path of advocacy for ELLs as Lida is encouraged to explore her story and to share it with others

if she chooses, thereby letting her chip a bit away at a wall in her life, the type of wall which is too often reinforced in educational settings (Friere, 2000).

This work has provided the reader with access to the lived emotional experience of an international student who became an ESL educator. My aim is to have this work resonate, indeed be *felt*, by those in the field of education who have ever found non-native speakers of English in their classrooms. I have intended for readers to be able to crawl into their own personal spaces, weaving themselves into their own stories by way of my stories, searching, like me, not for any solution, but instead digging deeply, to connect, to ask honest questions, and to recognize the complexity of our interactions with others. Perhaps readers have been able to catch glimpses of their own veils, have begun to consider the importance of mindfulness, and have initiated dialog with the hopeful and determined goal of developing a deeper understanding of privilege and power.

I love walking. Going on walks is something I discovered and did a lot of when I was in Germany. Weather permitting, walking became a part of my daily routine. It killed time. It was a source of exercise and got me outside into the fresh air. It was a stress burner. Sometimes I'd walk deliberately and tackle errands. Sometimes, I'd just ramble and take in the scenery and activity around me. On weekends when I had more time, I'd walk across town and up the hill to the Fortress. Walking was a time for personal decompression and idea generation.

I brought my love of walking back with me from Germany, and to this day, if it's practical to walk somewhere instead of drive, I will. I live in a village with lots of

sidewalks, and regularly I walk to the post office, the library, to local restaurants, and to visit my parents. I often have my dog in tow. Sometimes walking gives me a needed burst of energy at the end of a day. Sometimes I walk early in the morning because it gets me thinking and focused at the start of my day. As I worked on my dissertation, I would take mid-afternoon breaks and walk to clear my head or to sort out memories and ideas. You may have noted that my husband would encourage me to take a walk when I balked at working on my dissertation.

I am confident that walking will provide a fruitful backdrop as I continue to grapple with the complexities revealed in my dissertation.

Over the past few years, I've also discovered the benefits of walking and talking. My husband and I now frequently walk the dog together, sharing the events from our days, working together to solve problems, and planning for our future. I like having someone to point things out to and to have things I've not noticed along the route brought to my attention. Sometimes I convince a friend at work to walk with me over the lunch hour. It's an opportunity to take a break from the office, re-energize, and catch up with one another. Because I have found them to be productive, once in a while, I conduct short walking meetings with co-workers during the workday. I find that the steady rhythm of footsteps is very generative and fosters both light conversation as well as the sharing of less inhibited, creative ideas.

I'm always looking for new walking and talking partners. I am hopeful that one particular person will be open to walking and talking with me as I continue to grapple with the complexities revealed in my dissertation.

I'm overcome by the need to reach out to Dr. V. I haven't spoken with her in quite a while, but I now have some things I want to say to her and some things I'd like to figure out along with her. I write her a letter.

Dear Dr. V.,

I hope that all is well with you and that you find your new position to be as fulfilling as you had hoped. Since you were so kind to me when I was moving through my doctoral classes, I wanted to reach out to you and let you know that I hope to be defending my dissertation very soon. I'm sure as you look back on your own dissertation experience, you'll know what I mean when I say that I'm very, very busy, but also very, very excited!

While working on my dissertation, I thought about our introductory conversation a few years back in your office and how you were concerned that I might face a professional credibility issue were I to pursue my stated research interest in the Generation 1.5 ELL. This was because I myself am not a Generation 1.5 language learner. I understood this idea of a professional credibility issue to mean that I lacked authenticity and therefore legitimacy --- perhaps even trustworthiness --- because I am not a Generation 1.5 ELL. Honestly, one of my most vivid memories about our conversation that day was that I had no response whatsoever to those expressed concerns. While taken aback by your thoughts, I can't say I became defensive or angry. I just didn't have the reflective thoughts in place to initiate further conversation about it.

My dissertation has been an autoethnographic pursuit, and it's been quite the personal and professional journey. I can send you a copy of my writing if you are

interested, but I know how busy you must be. One outcome of that journey, however, is that it has empowered me to now respond to your comments from that day. I can't say that I have an absolute answer to send your way because, my goodness, what a complex, multi-faceted, and emotional topic this is to wrap our heads around! Still and all, though, I'd love to re-initiate the conversation because I think it's an important one to have.

I think I understand your point about credibility. You're right, I'm not a Generation 1.5er and I never will be. I'll never be able to walk in your shoes. And at the same time, you'll never be able to walk in mine. So I suppose you were correct to suggest a high level of caution at my end, and I really thank you for it because I know you were looking out for me.

However, in many ways, I suspect we do walk in the same (or quite similar) shoes. We are achievers who push ourselves to the limits, and we've made sacrifices to get where we are today. We are intellectually curious and have real passion for our areas of expertise, and as teachers in the classroom, we hope to leverage our students' strengths to generate a love of learning in them. I think we are both challenged by the complex notion of being a highly effective teacher.

And while none of these things could negate where our experiences and world views diverge, I think it's good to explore and value those commonalities, for those may generate authentically shared experiences and touch points, which may work to build personal connections and intercultural appreciation.

You see, through my dissertation, I've become more aware of how society places walls of separation between people. Please know that when I say walls, I'm referencing those socially constructed systems of power and privilege we are all caught up in. I know

that some of us are more aware of those walls than others, and some understand more deeply how the walls adversely affect people. I've taken a lot of time to explore personal experiences and related feelings concerning walls I or others have been up against, and I think I have begun to critically understand how those walls of separation shortchange us all. Again, I know it's all so very complex and there's so much more for me to yet experience and think through, but I know that walls both keep people out and trap people within, and because of that, it's so very important to remain mindful of their existence.

And so coming full circle, I guess I'm saying that I've figured out a way to generate credibility while conducting research involving ELLs, including those Generation 1.5 ELLs we spoke about that day in your office. I plan to continue to explore my experiences and interactions with ELLs via story and intimate creative outlets as a way to keep me mindful of walls that exist between us as well as to help me better understand how those walls work and how they might be chipped away. As a researcher and human being, honest and ongoing exploration, even if it becomes emotional and difficult, establishes my credibility, most certainly with myself and I hope with others too.

I'd love to continue this conversation with you at some point in the future. I'll be presenting my dissertation findings at the X conference for ESL professionals in a couple of months. If you'll be there as well, know it's often my habit to go for a walk first thing in the morning. I think walking generates mental focus and provides the perfect backdrop to fruitful conversation. I'd like to invite you to pack your sneakers and join me for one of those early morning jaunts. If it helps, perhaps you could think of this as a walking meeting. I believe that through purposeful and honest conversation, we could begin to chip away at a wall we both know stands between us.

Thoughts?

All My Best,

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ABSTRACT

**THE WALLED FORTRESS: AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF AN
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WHO BECAME AN ESL EDUCATOR**

by

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Advisor: Dr. Sandra Gonzales

Major: Curriculum and Instruction

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Through autoethnographic research, I conduct an intimate investigation into my experience as a sojourner college student in West Germany to see how my emotive response to that experience and its associated sense of self work to generate a deeper and more empathetic understanding of my role as an English as a second language (ESL) professional. I employ a layered account whereby I weave personal narrative, poetry, and sketching into academic writing so as to reach the emotive core of the research. I explore complex discriminatory relations in the classroom and beyond and learn how I as an ESL professional have played an active role in perpetuating power imbalances. I demonstrate the emotional process of noticing my privileged position and how a fresh mindfulness of power relations in the classroom can affect teacher instruction and reflection.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Elizabeth Corah-Hopkins earned a BA in German from the State University of New York at Buffalo. She went on to earn a Masters of Education in the Teaching of English as a Second Language (TESOL) from the State University of New York at Buffalo and a PhD in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis on English as a Second Language (ESL) Education from Wayne State University. She has worked in higher education for twelve years, initially as an ESL teacher/tutor and later on as an administrator and instructor of linguistics courses. While her career keeps Ms. Corah-Hopkins very busy, she relaxes by reading mysteries, walking her dog, exploring Rails-to-Trails on her bicycle, and spending time with her family.